

**Avant-Garde Film or Television Series.
On Edgar Reitz's Cinema Utopia.**

Mehrnoosh Sobhani

**PhD
University of Edinburgh
2002**



I declare:

- a) that this thesis has been composed by me,
- b) that the work contained within it is my own and
- c) that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

M.C.Sobhani

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Abstract

This thesis examines Edgar Reitz's internationally acclaimed films *Heimat* (1984) and *Die Zweite Heimat* (1992) in the context of the early avant-garde theories and films which Reitz developed during his years at the Ulm Film Institute. The two films have been widely analysed in articles, essays, books and PhD theses within the context of the Heimat film genre of the 1950s and the anti-Heimat and critical Heimat film genres of the 1960s and 1970s. They have also been extensively debated for their controversial portrayal of the Third Reich and the Holocaust. Astonishingly, in all these studies, critics have assumed that, apart from an autobiographical relationship, there is no link between Reitz's *Heimat*-films and his early avant-garde theories and films. Interpretations therefore largely overlook the cinematographic issues which the films raise.

This dissertation attempts to close this gap in the discussion of Reitz's *Heimat*-films. Starting with a detailed study of Reitz's early avant-garde theories and films, it investigates his contributions to the New German Cinema, shedding light on his novel approach in exploring a new film language, as well as a new film venue. Critics have debated the question of the venue for Reitz's *Heimat*-films, which were made for the cinema but became popular through the medium of television. Few, however, have related this debate to Reitz's earlier attempts to challenge the conventional venue of film. The fact that critics have predominantly focused on the question of history and the meaning of Heimat in the two films has had the unfortunate consequence that references to Reitz's earlier films have been restricted to those which likewise deal with the topic of National Socialism, namely *Die Reise nach Wien* (1973) and *Stunde Null* (1976).

This dissertation begins with an examination of Reitz's rarely discussed essay on a new cinema in "Definitionen" (1963), written a year after the declaration of the New German Cinema. It also examines the revised version of "Definitionen" in "Utopie Kino" (1963-65), and Reitz's collaborative essay with Alexander Kluge and Wilfried Reinke in "Wort und Film" (1965). It explores Reitz's theoretical ideas in his early avant-garde projects, *Kommunikation* (1961), *Geschwindigkeit* (1962), *VariaVision* (1964), *Mahlzeiten* (1967) and *Geschichten vom Kübelkind* (1970). *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat* are examined within the context of these early works. This approach leads to the investigation of new themes and meanings in *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat*, which in turn question the interpretation of the films as television series, conventional films and a departure from the New German Cinema. For the very first time, this approach calls attention to Reitz's utopias for a new film language, structure and venue, and presents *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat* as his attempts to realise these.

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Introduction

Many film critics regard the death of Rainer Werner Fassbinder on 10th June 1982 as symbolic of the demise of the New German Cinema.¹ This widely held belief is reflected in Wolfram Schütte's often quoted obituary for Fassbinder and the New German Cinema:

The New German Cinema (what remained from Oberhausen and what came after) has many kinds of energy. Alexander Kluge would be its synthesising intelligence, Werner Herzog its athletic will, Wim Wenders its phenomenological power of perception, Werner Schroeter emphatically underscores its emotional side, Herbert Achternbusch is its rebellious stubbornness and Volker Schlöndorff its craftsman. Rainer Werner Fassbinder, however, would be the heart, the beating, vibrant centre of all these partial impulses, these different aggregate states of its energy. ... He was the pounding heart. Now it has been stopped.²

While Schütte's description captures the wide range of temperaments behind the development of the New German Cinema, it nevertheless acknowledges only one director for the existence and future of this cinema. Johannes von Moltke criticised it for this very reason: "to postulate the rupture of an entire national cinema on the day after the death of one of its contributors implies a highly personalised, or author-centred view of what – or rather who – constituted the New German Cinema."³

While this hyperbolic dedication to the loss of one of the key players of the New German Cinema should not be taken all too literally, it has nevertheless influenced the historiography of the New German Cinema. Film critics consider the beginning of the New German Cinema to be the signing of the Oberhausen Manifesto in 1962, and the end as marked by the death of Fassbinder in 1982. Eric Rentschler touches upon this in his introduction in *West German Filmmakers on Film: Visions and Voices* by quoting Peter Buchka from 1983:

¹ The term "New German Cinema" is here used to refer to both "Der Junge Deutsche Film" and "Der Neue Deutsche Film". See also Robert Fischer and Joe Hembus, *Der Neue Deutsche Film: 1960-1980* (Munich: Goldmann Verlag, 1981), p.6.

² Wolfram Schütte, "Das Herz", in W. Schütte and P.W. Jansen (eds.), *Fassbinder* (Munich: Hanser, 1982), trans. by Thomas Elsaesser in *New German Cinema. A History* (Houndsmill: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1989), p. 310.

³ Johannes von Moltke, *Beyond Authenticity. Experience, Identity, and Performance in the New German Cinema* (PhD Dissertation: Duke University, 1998), p. 20.

The New German Film is dead. Those who created it in a collective of individuals will have to work from now on on their own. ... The New German Film has had its day. It is time to say goodbye to it.⁴

Rentschler explains that “in the mideighties, one no longer talks about the ascent of New German Film The fashionable topic is the demise of this national cinema. Even in the United States, where observers tend to lag behind developments abroad, we have seen the first wave of necrologies.”⁵

This thesis will examine the two internationally acclaimed films by Edgar Reitz, *Heimat. Eine Chronik in elf Teilen* (1984) and *Die Zweite Heimat. Chronik einer Jugend in dreizehn Filmen* (1992), which appeared after the “demise” of the New German Cinema in the 1980s. Both films have been widely discussed in the context of the Heimat film genre of the 1950s and the *Historikerstreit*, but hardly in the context of the development of the New German Cinema. This is what the present dissertation will attempt.

Reitz was one of the original 26 signatories of the Oberhausen Manifesto in Ulm in 1962. In Schütte’s obituary, however, which gives credit to only a handful of the most popular directors for the development of the New German Cinema, there is regrettably no mention of him. This is a situation very familiar to Reitz, who has not been taken into account in the early articles, essays and books on the New German Cinema. He explains this situation by pointing out that, although he was amongst the first six New German directors, he was neither the very first, like Kluge, nor the most conspicuous, like Straub, to merit any significant attention:

Wenn ich an Oberhausen und den Autorenfilm denke: Ich war einer der ersten sechs, aber nicht der erste und nicht der zweite, sondern der sechste. In keiner Liste der wichtigen deutschen Filmemacher dieser Zeit steht mein Name. Andererseits war meine Position nie so extrem, daß ich daraus wiederum Profil gewonnen hätte wie Jean-Marie Straub. Ich war kein Außenseiter, sondern irgendwo im Mittelfeld des Randes.⁶

⁴ Eric Rentschler, “Introduction: The Writing Out of West German Film History”, in E. Rentschler (ed.), *West German Filmmakers on Film: Visions and Voices* (New York/ London: Holmes & Meier, 1988), p.xiii.

⁵ Ibid., p.xiv.

⁶ Michael Töteberg (ed.), *Edgar Reitz. Drehort Heimat. Arbeitsnotizen und Zukunftsentwürfe* (Frankfurt/M: Verlag der Autoren, 1993), pp.228-229.

Although Reitz's contributions to the development of a new filmic language have been overlooked by film critics for a long time, they are, nevertheless, significant and substantial enough to warrant recognition. The Oberhausen Manifesto declared that "the future of the German film lies in the hands of those who have proven that they speak a new film language" in their successful short films.⁷ Reitz, who had already received two film prizes for his industrial short films *Krebsforschung* (1959) and *Moltopren I-IV* (1960) at the film festivals in Rome and Berlin,⁸ proved this not only on the day of the publication of the Manifesto on 28.2.1962, when his short 11.5 minute experimental film *Kommunikation* (1961) had its premiere, but also during the years to follow. Reitz's 13.5 minute film *Geschwindigkeit* (1963), in which he took inspiration from the futurists, especially Emilio Marinetti and Fernand Leger, to pursue his interest in technology by experimenting with speed and montage, received two *Bundesfilmpreise* and a *Grand Prix* at the Festivals in Lisbon and New York, and was shown at Festivals in Berlin, Cannes, Edinburgh, Tours and Knokke.

Reitz's early contributions to the New German Cinema not only included these highly avant-gardist short films, but also his collaboration together with Alexander Kluge and Detten Schleiermacher in founding and developing the Institut für Filmgestaltung in Ulm (Ulm Film Institute) in 1962, for training new generations of filmmakers. It was in Ulm that Reitz picked up on elements from avant-garde films of the 1920s in teaching camera work and montage, and in experimenting with these cinematographic devices in pursuit of the technical possibilities of filmmaking. He also produced some of the earliest theories for a new cinema to come out of Ulm. A year after the declaration of the Oberhausen Manifesto, in which the signatories had pledged to "create the new German feature film",⁹ Reitz published his essay "Definitionen"¹⁰ in which he presented an elaborate concept for a new avant-garde

⁷ "The Oberhausen Manifesto", in E. Rentschler (ed.), *West German Filmmakers on Film*, p.2.

⁸ Reinhold Rauh, *Edgar Reitz. Film als Heimat* (München: Wilhelm Heyne Verlag, 1993), p.45.

⁹ "The Oberhausen Manifesto", in E. Rentschler (ed.), *West German Filmmakers on Film*, p.2.

¹⁰ Edgar Reitz, "Definitionen", in *Output*, ed. by Studentenselbstverwaltung der Hochschule für Gestaltung (Ulm: Spanner Ulm, 1963), pp.19-27.

cinema, revised and republished in 1965 as “Utopie Kino”.¹¹ These contributions were largely overlooked in early books and essays on the New German directors. It was only after the immensely popular success of Reitz’s film *Heimat* in 1984 and *Die Zweite Heimat* in 1992 that the attention of film critics worldwide finally turned to him.

Reitz’s lack of status before 1984 is a result of film critics focusing on the output of the New German Cinema on the basis of the production of full-length feature films alone. For this reason it is frequently claimed that for a long time after the declaration of the Oberhausen Manifesto, nothing happened; not until 1966, when the films *Es*, *Der junge Törless*, *Nicht versöhnt*, *Schonzeit für Füchse* and *Abschied von gestern* took the film world by storm.¹² However, the period between 1962 and 1966 saw the founding of the Ulm Film Institute (1962), the opening of the Deutsche Kinemathek in Berlin (1963), the establishment of the Kuratorium junger deutscher Film (1965), not to mention the development of film theories, experiments and projects carried out by the various directors, all of which paved the way for the ensuing flood of New German “feature” films.

Reitz’s contributions are also judged on the basis of the production of full-length feature films, and therefore date from the release of *Mahlzeiten* in 1967. His earlier seminal film theories and experimental film projects seem, according to film critics, to have played no role in the creation of *Mahlzeiten*. Furthermore, the recognition he receives for *Mahlzeiten* does him little justice, as the film’s radical aesthetics are rarely acknowledged.

Barbara Bronnen and Corinna Brocher’s *Die Filmemacher* is the earliest and the only publication on the New German Cinema which dedicates a whole chapter to Edgar Reitz, one of seventeen New German directors interviewed for their book.¹³ The aim of the interview, however, is not to discuss Reitz’s film aesthetics, but

¹¹ Edgar Reitz, “Utopie Kino”, in *Liebe zum Kino. Utopien und Gedanken zum Autorenfilm. 1962-1983* (Köln: Verlag Köln, 1984), pp.12-31.

¹² R. Fischer and J. Hembus, *Der Neue Deutsche Film*, p.13.

¹³ Barbara Bronnen and Corinna Brocher, *Die Filmemacher. Zur Neuen deutschen Produktion nach Oberhausen 1962. Mit einem Beitrag von Alexander Kluge* (München: C.Bertelsmann Verlag, 1973).

rather the process and possibilities of receiving film funding for new or first time film directors. One significant point which emerges from the interview is Reitz's concern, more than any other director, with the venue where film is to be projected. In his comparison of television and cinema films, and his brief mention of his cinema pub project, it becomes clear that Reitz believes that a film's effectiveness depends very much on the venue where it is presented. Unfortunately, this significant point, which has played a major role throughout Reitz's film career, is not pursued and developed in the course of this interview. Bronnen and Brocher's intention lies firmly in exposing the restrictions on filmmakers imposed by the funding mechanism within the film industry in Germany.

In the same year, Klaus Kreimeier's "Der 'junge deutsche Film'" began a trend in acknowledging Reitz's contributions to the New German Cinema. This was nevertheless confined to his signing of the Oberhausen Manifesto and his first feature film *Mahlzeiten*.¹⁴ Eight years later, Robert Fischer and Joe Hembus refer to Reitz in the introduction to their book *Der Neue Deutsche Film: 1960-1980* as one of the Oberhausener who overstretched himself considerably in the demand for a new German film:

Natürlich ist es auch richtig, daß die meisten der Oberhausener Manifestanten mit ihrem Anspruch, den neuen deutschen Film zu schaffen, ihre Kapazität kräftig überzogen haben; zwar gehörten ein Alexander Kluge und ein Edgar Reitz zu dieser Gruppe (um nur die zu nennen, die heute noch eine Rolle spielen), aber auch genug Mitläufer, die kaum das Talent zum Filmemachen hatten, und die Bereitschaft wohl auch nicht.¹⁵

Although both authors recognise the art of the New German Cinema as an "art that is radical and springs all boundaries and norms",¹⁶ to use Werner Schroeter's words, they nevertheless fail to analyse the radical nature of the films which are referred to in their book. Reitz's *Mahlzeiten*, for example, is discussed in two pages without a single reference to the combination of documentary and feature filmmaking techniques, the multi-voiced narration and other unusual aesthetics in the film.

¹⁴ Klaus Kreimeier, "Der 'junge deutsche Film'" in *Kino und Filmindustrie in der BRD. Ideologieproduktion und Klassenwirklichkeit nach 1945* (Kronberg: Scriptor Verlag, 1973), pp.238-261.

¹⁵ R. Fischer and J. Hembus, *Der Neue Deutsche Film*, p.12.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.

Instead, the authors devote one page to re-telling the film and the other page to discussing the role of the female protagonist – and indeed female protagonists in general in all the films of the New German directors. There is no link to Schroeter's earlier quotation calling for art to be radical. Nor do the authors refer back to Reitz's early avant-garde films and projects as precursors to *Mahlzeiten*. In fact, they declare *Mahlzeiten* as an unexpected film in comparison with his earlier works, on the basis of its sensuality both in content and form:

Edgar Reitz ... hat sich mit vielen experimentellen Filmen derart als ein Meister in der kühl formalisierenden Darstellung von Produkten und Begriffen erwiesen (am berühmtesten ist seine *Geschwindigkeit* ...), daß niemand von ihm einen Film wie *Mahlzeiten* erwartet hätte, der in Inhalt und Form nichts als Sinnlichkeit ist.¹⁷

James Franklin's 1983 book, *New German Cinema: From Oberhausen to Hamburg* again overlooks Reitz. He prefers instead to focus mainly on Fassbinder, but also on Straub, Schlöndorff, Herzog, Wenders, and Syberberg, the "post-Oberhausen second generation who were able to take advantage of the film environment created by the Oberhausen group and who have in turn provided an impulse to still younger directors."¹⁸ With regard to Reitz, Franklin merely points out that he and other Oberhausen names, Rob Houwer, Vlado Kristl, Christian Rischert, Peter Schamoni, Haro Senft, Franz Joseph Spieker, Hans Rolf Strobel, Herbert Vesely and Bernhard Wicki "may sound familiar, vaguely familiar, or totally unknown to Americans."¹⁹ Like Kreimeier, Franklin also describes the theme of *Mahlzeiten* in a single sentence: "Edgar Reitz's *Mahlzeiten* (1966) documented the failure of a modern marriage in which the husband ultimately commits suicide and the wife marries an American mormon and moves to Utah."²⁰

While Reitz's early experimental films have received little or no recognition from critics,²¹ his 11-part film *Heimat*, referred to as "the most excellent media event of

¹⁷ Ibid., p.37.

¹⁸ James Franklin, *New German Cinema: From Oberhausen to Hamburg* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1983), p.35.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., p.36.

²¹ His co-production of *In Gefahr und größter Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod* (1974) was recently listed in *epd film* as the work of Alexander Kluge: "50. Jahre Fernsehfilm", in *epd Film*, March 2001, p.56.

the year”²² brought him instant international acclaim. The broadcast of *Heimat* on television in 1984 altered the perspective of all future accounts of the New German Cinema.

In anticipation of the success of *Heimat*, Klaus Phillips’ *New German Filmmakers: From Oberhausen Through the 1970s*, includes a 19-page essay on Reitz by the two authors Ingrid Scheib-Rothbart and Ruth McCormick, “Liberating Humanity and Film.”²³ *Heimat* had not yet been released, but the authors, encouraged by reports on the development of the film, give Reitz due recognition for his role together with Alexander Kluge in promoting the cause of the New German Cinema, explicitly referring to the establishment of the Kuratorium junger deutscher Film in 1965 and the Ulm Film Institute.²⁴ For the first time his two early experimental films *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit* are discussed in some detail, and Reitz is described as an “already sophisticated film theoretician”, one of “Oberhausen’s most vocal proponents in those early years”.²⁵ They conclude that:

There can be no question that Edgar Reitz is one of the most consistent and influential figures in contemporary German cinema. His films deal not only with the liberation of men and women who strive to shake off social oppression, but with the liberation of film itself from outmoded and obsolete forms. His dedication to innovative social and aesthetic theory is surpassed only by his commitment to the real world and its betterment. As long as he continues to make films, it seems certain that we will always be able to expect the unexpected from Edgar Reitz.²⁶

When *Heimat* was released in 1984 it proved an immediate success with German and foreign audiences and film critics. Subsequent articles and books in German and English announced one by one that Edgar Reitz was indeed one of the most important filmmakers of the New German Cinema, that *Heimat*, which dealt with 63

²² Horst Schäfer, “Respekt vor den Dingen. Der lange Weg des Edgar Reitz”, in Walter Schobert and H. Schäfer (eds.), *Fischer Film Almanach 1985. Filme, Festivals, Tendenzen* (Frankfurt/M: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1985), p.239.

²³ Ingrid Scheib-Rothbart and Ruth McCormick, “Liberating Humanity and Film”, in Klaus Phillips (ed.), *New German Filmmakers: From Oberhausen Through the 1970s* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1984), pp.247-265.

²⁴ Ibid., p.250.

²⁵ Ibid., p.247.

²⁶ Ibid., p.264.

years of German history from 1919-1982, “shows that the German cinema is still perfectly capable of surprising us again.”²⁷

Ronald Holloway wrote in *Variety*, “*Heimat* is not only the fulfilment of all the hopes of the New German Cinema over the past few decades, but should also go down as a milestone in contemporary film history.”²⁸ Peter Buchka wrote in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, “Edgar Reitz hat es gewagt, was so viele seiner Kollegen noch wollten und sich nicht trauten, nämlich in die ‘Mitte der Welt’ zu gehen. Und damit ist ihm gelungen, was nach 20 Jahren Neuer deutscher Film noch ausstand: dessen Summe, dessen Requiem.”²⁹ After reviewing the MOMA series (Recent Films from West Germany), J. Hoberman added that “so far as the West German film is concerned, there really is life after Fassbinder.”³⁰

While referring to the death of Fassbinder as the beginning of a downward spiral for the New German Cinema, John Ardagh wrote in his book *Germany and the Germans* that it was in fact Reitz’s “masterly” *Heimat*, “the best film of the lot”, that brought new life to the dying German Cinema:

By 1984 this New German Cinema appeared to be running badly out of steam. Fassbinder was dead; Herzog, Schlöndorff and Wenders had deserted Germany: they and other directors seemed to be repeating themselves and lacking new ideas; very little new talent was emerging; tighter financing was making it harder to find backing for new projects. The situation seemed even graver than in France where the *nouvelle vague* and its successors were similarly jaded and frustrated. And then through the gathering clouds there unexpectedly broke the brightest, most life-giving sun. In the summer of that year, Edgar Reitz’s *Heimat* was shown in Munich, then at the Venice Festival and around the world, to an intensity of critical applause that surely has had no equal in European cinema since the early work of Godard, Truffaut and Resnais.³¹

It is difficult to overlook the irony of Reitz’s situation: not only was the “best” New German film created at a point when the Cinema was claimed to be “running badly out of steam”, but it was created by one of its most unrecognised directors. Aware of this incongruity, Reitz compares his position with one of the characters from *Heimat*,

²⁷ John Ardagh, “Fassbinder, Herzog and Reitz’s ‘Heimat’: triumphs for the Cinderella of German arts”, in J. Ardagh, *Germany and the Germans* (London: Penguin, 1988), p.287.

²⁸ Ronald Holloway, “Heimat”, *Variety*, 12.9.1984, p.15.

²⁹ Buchka, Peter, “Ein Kinoereignis, das alle Grenzen sprengt. Der 16-stündige Film *Heimat* von Edgar Reitz zum Abschluß des Münchner Filmfestivals”, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3.7.84.

³⁰ E. Rentschler, “Introduction”, p.xiii.

³¹ J Ardagh, “Fassbinder, Herzog and Reitz’s ‘Heimat’”, p.298.

Glasisch-Karl who, despite being overlooked and mocked by the villagers, was the only remaining character in a position to act as their chronicler:

Die Erzähler, im Film wie im Leben auch, spielen eher eine Rolle am Rande. Chronisten können niemals Protagonisten sein. Über Jahre hindurch haben alle gedacht, der Glasisch ist ein bißchen "neben der Kapp", wie man im Hunsrück sagt, also nicht ganz ernst zu nehmen. Und eines Tages, es sind 50 Jahre vergangen, stellt sich heraus, der ist der einzige, der alles erzählen kann.³²

Reitz's situation can be compared to that of Glasisch-Karl. Despite lack of recognition as a serious film *auteur* for two decades, Reitz found himself in the position of a chronicler dealing with the one subject that united the New German directors in the first place: German history. Indeed, despite some attention being paid to *Heimat*'s aesthetic features, the film gained publicity above all for its treatment of history. While Reitz was generally praised for reclaiming German history from its trivialisation in *Holocaust* (1979), a family saga in the style of an American soap opera, many critics, particularly in America, argued that *Heimat* failed to reflect what happened during the National Socialist era. J. Hoberman expressed his bewilderment in the New York paper *Village Voice* that "this glorified miniseries has been so uncritically received": "Travesty Holocaust may have been, but one impact it had on its German audiences was in showing their country as a horrifying, rejecting, nightmare heimat – something Reitz does everything in his power to correct."³³ The topic of history in *Heimat* and its relevance to the New German Cinema soon became the exclusive focus of attention in subsequent articles, essays and books on the New German Cinema. Consequently, references to Reitz's earlier films were also confined to their treatment of history, in particular the depiction of National Socialism. In this respect, from Reitz's entire film oeuvre, only *Die Reise nach Wien* (1973) and *Stunde Null* (1976), which also deal with National Socialism, have gained any considerable attention.

From now on, critical analyses of the New German Cinema approached their subject by considering the treatment of history in film, particularly after the publication of

³² M. Töteberg (ed.), *Edgar Reitz: Drehort Heimat*, pp.228-229.

³³ J. Hoberman, "Once in a Reich Time", *The Village Voice*, 16.4.1985.

Anton Kaes' book, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film*.³⁴ This was followed a year later by Eric L. Santner's *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany*,³⁵ to mention only one of the many contributions which adopted this perspective.

Two critics who have consistently attacked Reitz's portrayal of German history in *Heimat* are Gertrud Koch and Heide Schlüpmann. They argue that Reitz has failed not only to portray a responsible and realistic account of German history, but also to challenge commercial film conventions. In the course of a round table discussion, Gertrud Koch maintained that, after observing an audience watching *Heimat* at a Frankfurt theatre, "the reactions to the film weren't that different from what you would expect in a 16-hour screening of *Dallas*."³⁶ This is ironic considering that Reitz made *Heimat* as a counter-reaction to the American melodrama *Holocaust*. During the same round table discussion Heide Schlüpmann argued that *Heimat* pursued the genre of the *Heimatfilm*,³⁷ the very film genre the Oberhausener set out to challenge.

After two decades of anonymity, Reitz created a great deal of controversy with *Heimat*. The film is regarded on the one hand as the "sum of the New German Cinema" while on the other hand it is seen as an extension of the *Heimat* genre of the 1950s, recreated in a television series. In a recent publication entitled *Edgar Reitz's Heimat. Histories, Tradition, Fictions*, Rachel Palfreyman addresses this controversy: "So for a signatory of the Oberhausen manifesto, which had denounced such banal and conservative texts, to call his most ambitious work *Heimat* was to invite spectators and critics alike to compare the film with other *Heimat* texts, and indeed, to re-evaluate the discourse of *Heimat*."³⁸ This is exactly what Palfreyman

³⁴ Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History as Film* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992). Section on *Heimat*: pp.161-192.

³⁵ Eric L. Santner, *Stranded Objects: Mourning, Memory, and Film in Postwar Germany* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1990). Section on *Heimat*: pp.57-102.

³⁶ Gertrud Koch in discussion with Friedrich P. Kahlenberg, Klaus Kreimeier and Heide Schlüpmann, "That's Why Our Mothers Were Such Nice Chicks", *New German Critique*, no. 36, 1985, p.20.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Rachel Palfreyman, *Edgar Reitz's Heimat. Histories, Traditions, Fictions* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), p.19.

undertakes in her investigation, providing a detailed background of the Heimat film of the 1950s, the mountain film of the 1920s and 1930s and the anti-Heimat and critical Heimat film and theatre of the 1960s and 1970s. She considers some of the conceptual interpretations of the term 'Heimat', and explores the two specific moments of intertextual reference in *Heimat* - the films *La Habanera* by Detlef Sierck (1937) and *Heimat* by Carl Froelich (1938). She also recapitulates the Historian's Dispute (*Historikerstreit*) of 1986/1987, summarising the debates on the portrayal of Holocaust in film, and applying these to *Heimat*.

In her elaborate study, Palfreyman makes some interesting and accurate observations regarding the two Heimat films quoted in *Heimat*, and Reitz's critical portrayal of National Socialism. However, she assumes the basic premise that neither of Reitz's two *Heimat*-films³⁹ are linked in any way with Reitz's earlier theories and films: "The New German Cinema remains an influence on Reitz's filmmaking, though he has departed from the cinematic style of the 1960s and 1970s."⁴⁰ While she defends Reitz's film style against accusations that it follows the Heimat genre of the 1950s or that it whitewashes German history, she is unable to develop a counter-argument in which she could contextualise Reitz's style as the continuation of an avant-garde film style developed during the early years at Ulm. Instead, she contextualises her observations by comparing them with the theories of Jacques Derrida, Mikhail Bakhtin, Walter Benjamin and Roland Barthes, while ignoring the theories which Reitz himself developed for a new cinema. Due to this oversight, Palfreyman looks to different directions for a context in which she can interpret her observations. Her interpretation of *Die Zweite Heimat*, for example, makes no reference to the film's main subject of avant-garde art and how this should be interpreted regarding accusations that the film is a departure from Reitz's avant-garde film style. Instead she focuses on the issue of gender, concluding that *Die Zweite Heimat* makes up for the shortcomings of *Heimat* through its introduction of the figure of the woman

³⁹ The term *Heimat*-films is used here and throughout this thesis to refer to *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat*. It should not be understood as a reference to the Heimat film genre of the 1950s.

⁴⁰ R. Palfreyman, *Edgar Reitz's Heimat*, p.98.

artist. In fact she concludes that the most important achievement of the film, is the way gender is dealt with:

Whereas *Heimat* remains rooted in rather conservative gender relations – male artists are set against maternal Heimat women and exotic muses – *Die Zweite Heimat* addresses these concerns and explores art, gender and politics in a way that moves far beyond the limitations of the 1980s project. Indeed, Clarissa's (separatist) feminist art can be compared to Hermann's electronic art in *Heimat* in that it is privileged as a possible key to resolving the dilemmas central to film.⁴¹

In their books on *Heimat*, Michael Töteberg and Reinhold Rauh are the only two authors to almost touch upon a possible link between Reitz's early film projects and his *Heimat*-films. Töteberg's *Edgar Reitz. Drehort Heimat* consists of Reitz's production notes and an interview on the making of the films. Of extreme importance to this dissertation is a question posed to Reitz in the final chapter, which refers to a comment made by one of the characters in *Die Zweite Heimat*. In part 1 of *Die Zweite Heimat*, the musician Hermann is told by Herr Edel, a passenger on the train to Munich, that the avant-garde should slow down. With reference to this comment, Reitz is asked whether in fact a decelerated avant-garde cinema can reach a larger audience. The question is preceded by the acknowledgement that Reitz's film, *Die Zweite Heimat*, consists of many avant-gardist elements, and that his dramaturgy does not follow conventional patterns. However, it is then pointed out that "in a film of such length, perceptions change, they have to: one views differently and allows things to be shown differently."⁴² The suggestion is on the one hand that the length of *Die Zweite Heimat* has actually diluted the impact of the avant-gardist elements in the film. On the other hand, it implies that Reitz too has compromised or decelerated much of his avant-garde ideas, in order to reach a larger audience.

The interview digresses from a discussion of avant-gardist aspects of *Die Zweite Heimat* – which are never actually specified – and focuses instead on the use of Reitz's earlier films as autobiographical material for *Die Zweite Heimat*. The question therefore never arises as to whether or not *Die Zweite Heimat*'s "avant-

⁴¹ Ibid., p.216.

⁴² M. Töteberg (ed.), *Edgar Reitz: Drehort Heimat*, p.243.

gardist elements” are in fact adopted from Reitz’s earlier films, and whether they represent an element of continuity in the film aesthetics of Reitz from 1962 to 1992.

The opportunity to investigate the relationship between Reitz’s largely unacknowledged experimental works in Ulm and his internationally popular *Heimat*-films is also missed in the second book on Reitz, Reinhold Rauh’s *Edgar Reitz. Film als Heimat*. This book is unique amongst all the works concerned with Reitz’s *Heimat*-films, by way of its comprehensive coverage of Reitz’s biographical background and also his rarely publicised early experimental film projects. Rauh’s approach, however, remains purely autobiographical. In the early chapters he details events in Reitz’s life and career, in order to indicate to the reader in the later chapters the extent to which *Heimat* and especially *Die Zweite Heimat* are based on the director’s personal experience.

Almost two decades after the release of *Heimat* and prior to the release of Reitz’s third *Heimat* film, *Heimat 2000*,⁴³ this dissertation aims to explore a relationship which has so far remained unexplained. It aims to investigate the link between Reitz’s internationally successful *Heimat*-films and his early avant-garde theories and films. The question it pursues is whether these films are a continuation of Reitz’s early avant-garde theories and films, whether one of the most underestimated New German directors has succeeded in capturing the essence of the New German Cinema at a point in time when the cinema was proclaimed dead, thereby questioning the date commonly associated with the demise of this genre. It also questions whether the avant-garde film aesthetics developed in Ulm have contributed to the success of Reitz’s *Heimat*-films in television. In undertaking this investigation, the dissertation will begin with a reading of Reitz’s early essay “Definitionen” and his collection of essays in *Liebe zum Kino*.

⁴³ *Heimat 2000* is currently the working title of Reitz’s third epic *Heimat*-film.

Chapter 1: Reitz's Early Avant-Garde Theories and Films.

1. The Concept of a New Cinema

The main body of Reitz's theories were conceived and taught alongside Alexander Kluge at the Ulm Film Institute. These are to be found in his collection *Liebe zum Kino*. This dissertation will make frequent references to this collection and especially to the essay "Utopie Kino", which Rauh claims to be Reitz's most significant piece of writing on the concept of a new cinema. However, two years earlier, in 1963, Reitz had published the original version of this essay under the title "Definitionen" in the Ulm Film Institute's annual journal *Output*. It is this early version of his thoughts on the future shape of German cinema, that is taken as the starting point here. "Definitionen" introduces two vital concepts which have been omitted in "Utopie Kino". The juxtaposition of these two concepts *Lichtspieltheater* (movie theatre) and *Kino* (cinema) are instrumental in distinguishing between Reitz's criticism of conventional cinema and his suggestions for a new one.

"Definitionen" also indicates, in its place of publication, that the concepts contained within it emerged as part of the experimental laboratory work undertaken together with Alexander Kluge in Ulm. For this reason Reitz's concepts for a new film share some similarities with Kluge's *Ulmer Dramaturgien*,¹ making it often impossible to know which of the two directors is responsible for introducing particular concepts. Rauh acknowledges this and comments upon it at the beginning of his short chapter on the film theories from Ulm: "Edgar Reitz hat zusammen mit Alexander Kluge das theoretische Selbstverständnis der Ulmer Hochschule geprägt, ohne daß immer klar sein könnte, von wem die einzelnen Anteile stammen."²

¹ Klaus Eder and Alexander Kluge (eds.), *Ulmer Dramaturgien. Reibungsverluste* (München, Vienna: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1980).

² R. Rauh, *Edgar Reitz*, p.75.

1.1. "Definitionen"

"Definitionen" comprises four pairs of definitions which Reitz juxtaposes to distinguish his vision of a new cinema from the structural and ideological premises which govern conventional cinema. Vital to the essay and to all of Reitz's later film theories is his distinction between the conventional venue cinema, which he refers to as *Lichtspieltheater*, and his suggestion for a new venue, which he refers to as *Kino*.

Reitz uses the term *Lichtspieltheater* to emphasise the fact that, apart from presenting moving images in place of live performers, there is little difference between conventional cinema and theatre. In so doing, he takes up an argument which is almost as old as cinema itself: an argument which began in Kurt Pinthus' *Kinobuch*.³ The cinema debate of 1913 considered whether cinema should not develop its own aesthetic form, independent of the outmoded and inappropriate form of the theatre, which it has largely imitated:

Denn dies ist der Hauptfehler des Kinos: daß es sein eigentliches Wesen zu mißachten beginnt. Das Kino will Theater werden, ohne zu erkennen, daß es nichts mit dem Theater gemein hat. Das Kino wird sich nur halten und entwickeln können, wenn es wirklich Kino sein will, also wenn es sich seiner unendlichen Möglichkeiten erinnert und aufgibt, der Schaubühne nacheifern zu wollen.⁴

That cinema must cease to imitate theatre in order to discover and develop its own aesthetic form, is also Reitz's starting point in "Definitionen". While Reitz takes up many of the points made by Pinthus in *Kinobuch*, he nevertheless revises and re-applies them to the situation of contemporary cinema. Pinthus' argument that cinema should distinguish itself from theatre as a visual and not verbal medium is based on the fact that silent films, unlike theatre productions, could not rely on the spoken word. Pinthus therefore advocates the development of plot through the spoken word in the theatre and through costumes, movement and gestures in the cinema:

³ Kurt Pinthus, "Einleitung: Das Kinostück [1913]", in K. Pinthus (ed.), *Das Kinobuch* (Frankfurt/M: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1983), pp.19-28.

⁴ Ibid., p.19.

Das Wesentliche der Schaubühne ist Entwicklung eines Schicksals, ausgedrückt durch das Wort; das Wesentliche des Kinostücks: unterhaltsames Milieu, belebt durch handgreifliche Handlung, ausgedrückt durch Bewegung und Geste. Das Wesentlichste des Theaters ist dem Kino versagt: der Dialog, das Wort. Den Hauptinhalt des Kinos aber machen gerade die Möglichkeiten aus, welche das edle Theater meidet oder nur andeutet: belebte Natur, fremdartiges Milieu, überraschende Tricks, stark bewegte Szenen.⁵

Reitz shifts the emphasis from a distinction between the programme content of the two media to a distinction between the structure, format and presentation of their programmes. This shift in emphasis should not be interpreted as a lack of interest on Reitz's part in distinguishing the programme content of cinema from theatre. On the contrary, in his collaborative essay with Alexander Kluge and Wilfried Reinke, "Wort und Film", written in 1965, Reitz makes several suggestions for alternative and non-theatrical ways of combining sound and image in film.⁶ However, he is one of few directors to seek innovative solutions for the whole spectrum of cinema, including presentational forms and the interior design and architecture of cinema. His aims in this respect have been clear from the outset of his career. In the same year as signing the Oberhausen Manifesto, Reitz wrote in his essay "Liebe zum Kino": "Wir glauben nicht an den 'neuen Film', sondern an das 'neue Kino'. Das Kino ist der Ort, an dem sich 'Film' ereignet. ... Kino ist nicht identisch mit 'Film'. 'Kino' ist eine dritte Instanz, ist die Synthese aus Film und Zuschauer."⁷

Reitz points out that conventional cinema still draws its inspiration from the medium of theatre in terms of the duration of its programme, which like the theatre is on average 100 minutes in length. In addition to this point, Reitz criticises conventional cinema for imitating the theatre in selecting a fixed time for film screening. In view of film's audio-visual technology, Reitz regards this as unnecessary. He also questions the procedure of seating the audience in rows of seats facing a stage, where the screen remains concealed by curtains until the film presentation is due to begin. In the words of one of his characters in *Die Zweite Heimat* "isn't this all thoughtless imitation of the theatre?"

⁵ Ibid., pp.19-20.

⁶ Edgar Reitz, Alexander Kluge, Wilfried Reinke, "Wort und Film", in K. Eder and A. Kluge (eds.), *Ulmer Dramaturgien*, pp.9-27.

⁷ Edgar Reitz, "Liebe zum Kino" (1962), in *Liebe zum Kino*, pp.7-8.

Seit der Erfindung der Cinematographie ist Film ja nichts anderes als die Vorführung bewegter Bilder auf einer Bühne. Die Leinwand steht auf einer Bühne hinter einem Vorhang wie der Schauspieler, und wenn der Vorhang sich hebt, beginnt die Vorstellung. – Ich frage mich, ist das nicht alles gedankenlose Nachahmung des Theaters?⁸

For this reason, Reitz indicates that by using the term *cinema* for his own projects, he is deliberately referring to “a particular architectural solution for the presentation of film as well as a new theory of film structure which demands that, in their conception, films should take into consideration the requirements of the new space and the audience”:

Das Wort Kino bezeichnet sowohl eine bestimmte architektonische Lösung des Filmaufführungsraumes, als auch eine neue Filmgestaltungstheorie, die Filme fordert, die von ihrer Konzeption her der neuen Raum- und Publikumsbedingung adäquat sind.⁹

As film is “a technical recording which can be reproduced at any given moment, thereby enabling the audience to come at any particular time”, Reitz suggests a *continuous* presentation of film.¹⁰ This necessarily leads to a departure from the theatrical dramaturgical structure of beginning, middle and end. Instead of a horizontal chronology in film, Reitz suggests a vertical chronology where images are not forced into a false cause-and-effect relationship, but rather portray events as they happen, largely unrelated: “Die Vorstellung von der chronologischen Verknüpfung der Ereignisse ist ohnehin eine Illusion, mit der die wichtigsten Vorgänge des heutigen Lebens nicht mehr erfaßt werden können.”¹¹

In his semi-autobiographical film, *Die Zweite Heimat*, the concept of a departure from film’s conventional dramaturgical structure is introduced by the filmmaker and cameraman, Rob, who announces that by departing from the traditions of the theatre, he intends to provide a permanent and continuous presentation of film: “Jedenfalls lösen wir die Guckkasten-Leinwand auf. Was hat Film mit Theater zu tun? Wir stellen einfach alles in Frage. Keine festen Anfangszeiten mehr, kein Ende, permanente Dauervorstellung. Film – Film – Film!”¹²

⁸ Part 11.

⁹ E. Reitz, “Definitionen”, p.27.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.26.

¹¹ Ibid., p.27.

¹² Rob in part 10 of *Die Zweite Heimat*.

Similarly, by taking advantage of its technical capabilities, the new film can, according to Reitz, liberate itself from a chronology in direction, time and dimension. By incorporating the projection of several films onto several screens, film can replace chronology with simultaneity: “Der Abbau der Hierarchien, der im gesellschaftlichen Zusammenhang längst im Gange ist, wird sich auch in der Kinogestaltung spiegeln und das Augenmerk wird sich auf ein neues, äußerst interessantes Kontinuum der Gleichzeitigkeiten von Ereignissen richten.”¹³

Reitz points out that the structure and format of conventional feature film responds to the unnecessary restrictions of the movie theatre: “Der Handelsartikel Spielfilm entspricht in seinen Gestaltungsgrundlagen den Erfordernissen des Lichtspieltheaters (auch Filmtheater genannt).”¹⁴ He defines conventional feature film as a genre with an average length of 100 minutes. It is entertaining, consists of a plot with a beginning and an end, and is played by actors, laymen and stars in or outside a studio. It is black-and-white or colour and is shot in one of the following formats: standard, wide screen, cinema scope or cinerama.¹⁵

In contrast to the feature film, Reitz’s suggestion for a new film assumes that there are no restrictions within the venue. In “Definitionen” his suggestion for an alternative film is one that is free from the parameters imposed by working within the boundaries and conventions of one genre. Instead, he proposes a new film, which takes advantage of the technical, stylistic and methodical possibilities of the three major film genres: feature, documentary and experimental film. Such a film could draw on all of the above film styles in any order to deal most appropriately with its subject matter. For this reason, Reitz refers to such a film as an analytical film, because its object is not to entertain, nor to produce propaganda for an existing or a utopian order, but rather to analyse its subject matter.¹⁶

Reitz’s criticism of conventional feature film and his suggestions for an analytical film take up elements introduced by Brecht in his essay “Anmerkungen zur Oper

¹³ E. Reitz, “Definitionen”, p.27.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.26.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp.23-24.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp.24-25.

‘Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny’” (“The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre”), where he distinguishes between conventional theatre (dramatic theatre) and modern theatre (epic theatre).¹⁷ Although both authors are concerned with two different media, their suggestions for the technical modernisation of the media share many similarities. Brecht’s criticism of “dramatic theatre” is based on its plot orientation, its aim being to entertain and to involve the audience. It assigns a passive role to the audience as they watch scenes develop and grow out of one another in the linear structure of the play. His suggestions for an epic theatre are aimed at a play based on a narrative instead of a plot, using montage to jump from self-enclosed scenes, leading to a structure which can be described in curves. Brecht’s aim was to involve the audience in a more active role, turning them from spectators into observers.

A third pair of definitions which Reitz introduces in his essay are *Schnitt* (editing) and *Montage* (montage). While camera technique and montage are Reitz’s speciality field, the definitions here remain brief and basic, introducing very little of the dynamic experimentation Reitz demonstrates in his films. He introduces montage as a concept largely used during the revolutionary period of Russian filmmaking. This association indicates that Reitz’s understanding of montage relates to the concept developed and explored by Sergei Eisenstein in his renowned films *Strike* and *Battleship Potemkin* (1925); a concept which regards montage as a technique used not to enhance continuity, but rather to create contrast and confrontation. This is a seminal point in distinguishing conventional from avant-garde film, one that Reitz, Kluge and Reinke take up in their essay “Wort und Film”.

Reitz distinguishes between editing and montage, considering the former as a means of maintaining artificial continuity. For this reason, according to Reitz, editing takes place at the final stage of film production in the editing room. It is nothing more than a cut and paste technique, which relies on the organisational skills of sorting out, checking, cutting and pasting together images. In contrast, montage requires artistic

¹⁷ B. Brecht, “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre” in J. Willett (ed.), *Brecht on Theatre. The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973), p.37.

skill, and is taken into consideration at all three stages of filmmaking: during writing, shooting and finally in the editing room.

As Reitz advocates films which abandon conventional dramaturgy and a chronological order in time, space and dimension, it is not surprising he should choose montage as a technique vital for his new film. Montage enables the departure from any form of chronology and can be used within one shot just as much as in assembling several shots. Reitz expands on the possibilities of montage in the revised version of this essay, "Utopie Kino", and demonstrates it most effectively in his early films *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit*.

Finally, the last pair of definitions from Reitz's essay embrace the whole system of cinema. Reitz distinguishes between the system of conventional cinema and his cinema utopia, referring to the former as *Kino der Zutaten* (cinema of ingredients) and the latter as *Kino der Autoren* (auteur cinema). Kluge also uses both terms to distinguish between the two basic methods of film production.¹⁸

Reitz explains that under the system of *cinema of ingredients*, the elements involved in making the film - the director, star, author, cameraman - are all viewed as components. Should a film become successful, the particular elements responsible for that success are then selected to make further films. In this way, the value of the individual ingredients increases far more than the value of the film in which they have participated. Reitz criticises this system for transferring the decision-making role to producers. He warns that under such a system, the appeal of the individual ingredients may increase, but their independence is stripped away: "Die Zugkraft der einzelnen Zutaten (Star, Regisseur etc.) wird im Außenverhältnis künstlich weiter aufgebaut, während ihre Selbständigkeit im Innenverhältnis abgebaut wird."¹⁹

Instead, Reitz advocates *auteur cinema*. Under this system, the director is recognised as the main creative force behind a film. It is a concept that Reitz and the New German directors adopted from the French New Wave when conceiving the New

¹⁸ B. Bronnen and C. Brocher, *Die Filmemacher*, p.234.

¹⁹ E. Reitz, "Definitionen", p.20.

German Cinema. The aim is to reverse the roles conventionally attributed to the director and producer.

Reitz implies that in the *cinema of ingredients*, films are not regarded as works of art, but rather as commodities which are put together by the producer. These always comply with the set-up of the movie theatre in offering entertaining films of 90-minute duration with a star cast. By contrast, in the *auteur cinema*, Reitz stresses that films are regarded as works of art like paintings, music and architecture.

Reitz extends the concept of the *auteur*, claiming that in filmmaking the *auteur* predominantly makes use of autobiographical material: “Die Identifikation des Filmautors mit seinem Stoff geht meistens so weit, daß von einer autobiografischen Tendenz gesprochen werden kann. Es handelt sich eigentlich immer um “Originalstoffe”, die den Filmen zugrunde liegen.”²⁰ In making this distinction, he emphasises the lack of originality or the distance between a director and his material within the system of commercial cinema, which relies heavily on scripts and adaptations from literature.

Within *auteur* cinema, the director deals with a theme or situation, inspired by his own personal experience or interest in that subject. This is certainly the case with Reitz, whose films almost always deal with his fascination with technical communication media or with incidents, memories, stories or personalities which he has encountered. He does not claim, however, that *auteur* films cannot be based on novels. Rather, he insists upon the correct use of terminology in referring to a film based on a novel not as a literary adaptation, but rather the *auteur*'s visual interpretation of the novel. He emphasises that the art forms novel and film are two completely independent, autonomous works. A film may be based on a novel, it may share the same theme and some of the plot, but inevitably the two art forms must deal with their subject matter in different ways and must change the material to suit their own forms of expression: “Film und Roman sind in diesem Falle zwei völlig voneinander unabhängige autonome Werke, die das Thema und einige äußere

²⁰ Ibid., p.21.

Handlungsverläufe gemeinsam haben.”²¹ The *auteur* is not to be confused with a literary author. The *auteur* is the creator of the film, who will determine the film’s shape and form according to his or her artistic vision.

Reitz’s definition of the cinema of ingredients categorises commercial cinema as a system in which each ingredient is a separate unit which does not conform to the *auteur*’s vision, but rather continues in its own particular style, familiar to the audience through previous films. This makes commercial feature films easy viewing and prevents the possibility of a truly original work.

Needless to say, the concept of *auteur cinema* has received much criticism, mostly for its arrogant insistence that the director is solely responsible for the artistic merit of a film. Film’s unique feature is its reliance on input from different artistic sources. The director is responsible for the overall vision and must correct and guide these diverse elements accordingly. Often, however, these individual elements contribute far more to the film than the director could have anticipated. In this respect the merits of a film should not be attributed solely to the director.

Unlike any other New German director, Reitz insists that the *auteur* must be a technically minded director, able to grasp all film techniques: “Der Filmautor (Realisator) trägt die Verantwortung für den Film in allen seinen Teilen. Dies bedeutet, daß er nicht nur ein souveräner Beherrscher aller filmtechnischen Prozesse ist, sondern auch, daß sich seine Phantasie ursprünglich im Bereich des technischen Mediums bewegt.”²² Reitz refers to the Russian director Pudowkin, who wrote that film aesthetics can develop only by using cinematic means: “die Filmkunst könne nur auf der Basis ihrer eigenen Methoden entstehen”.²³ In referring to Pudovkin, Reitz is again implying that cinema cannot develop by imitating the theatre, rather it needs to rely on its own methods.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., p.20.

²³ Ibid., p.21.

1.2. "Utopie Kino"

The need for cinema to rely on its own methods is a crucial point in Reitz's film theory and one that he re-emphasises two years after "Definitionen" in "Utopie Kino". In this essay Reitz regrettably omits the pair of concepts *Lichtspieltheater* and *Kino* which highlight his fundamental distinction between a future cinema and conventional cinema. In its place, however, he adds a further eight pages to his original triple pairing of definitions which focus not on discussing and criticising conventional cinema and its imitation of the theatre, but rather on concrete proposals for a model cinema. Reitz goes into some detail describing the interior design of a new cinema and its architectural structure, demonstrating that his concerns for a new film, do indeed take him to the root of the problem, the venue.²⁴

In these eight pages Reitz returns to his basic argument that without changing the venue, any changes made in film will remain ineffective. For these changes to materialise, Reitz warns that technical and structural advances have to be made in the movie theatre, otherwise an art form will soon remain which does not meet contemporary circumstances: "Wird das Kino der Zukunft in technischer Hinsicht heute nicht vorbereitet, wird man bald ohne eine Kunstform leben müssen, die den gegenwärtigen Lebensumständen adäquat ist."²⁵

He argues that a new film cannot be effective in the old movie theatre.

Der Betrug wird besonders deutlich, wenn ein Film, der den neuen Kategorien entspricht, unter den bestehenden Bedingungen aufgeführt wird. Man spürt ganz deutlich, daß er im Lichtspieltheater fehl am Platze ist. Er wird in den Rahmen einer Bühnenimitation projiziert und tut im Grunde nichts anderes, als den Raum und den Rahmen, in dem er sichtbar ist, zu ignorieren.²⁶

Reitz believes that a new venue is imperative not only for developments in new film forms, but also for developments in film equipment and technology:

²⁴ E. Reitz, "Utopie Kino", p.22.

²⁵ Ibid., p.21.

²⁶ Ibid., p.24.

Auf das Kino warten auch die nicht voll ausgenutzten Geräte, Kameras, Aufnahmestäbe, Schneidetische, Anamorphote, die ganze Kinotechnik, die bisher nicht ausgewertet und nicht dazu verwendet wurde, aus dem Lichtspiel Kino zu machen, d. h. Realisationen hervorzubringen, die aus den Bereichen stammen, die mit Hilfe dieser Technik erschlossen werden können.²⁷

His proposal is to build a cinema which avoids permanent or fixed points of reference; a cinema which has a feel of boundlessness or immensity in every direction. To achieve this, he suggests that seats should be set out in a way which allow a constant stream of visitors to enter the auditorium without disturbing the already seated viewers. Not only should the seats make the viewers feel comfortable, but also the viewers should be given the freedom to make notes or take refreshments at any given time. Reitz's considerations also go beyond the auditorium. He suggests that the venue should be in a building which can offer ancillary rooms for discussion amongst smaller groups. These rooms should be equipped to make possible the reviewing of smaller or greater parts of the film. There should be a café with bar and several studio rooms where films of any format could be projected according to the demand of the viewers. There should also be a cinema library, covered walks, parking places, garages and nurseries. What Reitz is suggesting here, is an institution in which the most basic needs and urges of the cinema viewer can be catered for, to transform cinema-going into an event where the film in itself is not the only attraction.²⁸

The aim of the additional pages in "Utopie Kino" is to underline the significant role of technology in the development of a new film and venue. Reitz shifts his line of approach from "Definitionen" in using headings under which he contemplates possible changes in film's venue, presentation and reception as well as its structure and content, which can be realised by taking advantage of the latest technology. For this reason there are many similarities between Reitz's proposals for a new film and the works of the early avant-garde filmmakers, who took the speed of technology as the expression of their art. The suggestions Reitz makes in the additional eight pages of "Utopie Kino" highlight his own speciality in the area of montage and

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., pp.22-23.

cinematography, the two subjects which he taught at the Ulm Film Institute, and the two subjects which embody the essence of cinema for the early avant-garde filmmakers.

The avant-garde filmmakers in the 1920s also explored film's aesthetic form by acknowledging and utilising its technical abilities. In the earliest known documentation of his involvement with film, Walther Ruttmann argues that "a work of art will result only if it is born of the possibilities and demands of its material."²⁹ The avant-garde filmmakers believed that film has the potential to become a work of art only if it realises its essence as a visual art, and expresses this using its inherent technical capabilities: "What I understand by film is visual rhythm presented by means of photo-technology, with both rhythm and technology serving as building blocks."³⁰ This, they felt, had remained hitherto unacknowledged, prompting Ruttmann to declare that he loves the cinema "not as it is, but as I would like it to be."³¹ This sentiment was also expressed by Pinthus in 1913, who criticised cinema for the self same reason: "Der Irrweg und Niedergang des Kinos begann in dem Augenblick, als das Kino sein eigentliches Wesen vergaß, unselbständig wurde, sich anschickte, vorhandene Werke der Dichtung zu verfilmen. Statt für seine Möglichkeiten eigene Stücke (nicht Theaterstücke) erfinden zu lernen."³²

The aim of the avant-garde filmmakers was to liberate film from its subordinate role to storytelling. They felt that by adopting the technique of montage they could use the element of time in film not as a vehicle to develop images into stories, but rather to lend images rhythm, speed and movement:

²⁹ Walther Ruttmann, "Art and the Cinema", in Walter Schobert, *The German Avant-Garde Film of the 1920's* (Munich: Goethe Institute, 1989), p.7.

³⁰ Hans Richter, "The Badly Trained Soul", in W. Schobert, *The German Avant-Garde Film of the 1920's*, p.106.

³¹ W. Ruttmann, "Art and the Cinema", p.7.

³² K. Pinthus, "Einleitung: Das Kinostück", p. 21.

For cinematography belongs to the group of *visual arts*, and its laws are most closely related to those of painting and the dance. It uses the following means of expression: forms; surfaces; brightnesses and darkneses with all their inherent moods; but above all the movement of these optical phenomena, the temporal development of one form out of the other. It is visual art with the novelty that the root of the artistry cannot be found in a final result, but in the temporal growth of one revelation out of the other.³³

As it is the element of time which differentiates film from still-life visual arts, Ruttmann formulated the theory of “painting in time” to define the aspirations of the avant-garde filmmakers; a term which he used initially as the title to his 1919 essay “Malerei mit der Zeit”.³⁴ The attempt to paint in the medium time inevitably led the directors to work with another art form which, like film, relies on technology and also works with time: music. As Walter Schobert points out, this affinity to music “is already evident in the titles of the first films: *Lichtspiel Opus I*, *Opus II*, *Diagonal-Sinfonie*, *Rhythmus 23*.”³⁵ These concepts of film as a visual medium relying on technology and time, and sharing affinities with music have formed the basis of Reitz’s film theories. Reitz refers to the similarities between music and film in his essay “Utopie Kino”:

In der Art der Phantasie und der Arbeitspraxis bestehen nicht mehr allzu große Unterschiede zwischen den Musikstudios und den Filmstudios. Hier wie dort wird Material erarbeitet, das geschnitten und montiert wird. Hier wie dort haben wir es mit maschinellen Abläufen zu tun, deren Rhythmus *Grundlage für die schöpferische Phantasie* geworden ist. Ebenso wie die Musik, beschränkt sich auch der in der Berührung mit diesen Vorgängen entstehende Film nicht auf die formale Gliederung von Zeitabläufen, sondern er dringt in das Zeitgefühl ein, zerstört es, setzt Pausen, verändert Chronologien und verschafft *Überblicke*.³⁶

Only recently has Reitz mentioned the works of the avant-garde filmmakers as the inspiration for his own films: “Among my early models were twenties avantgarde films, which we watched time and again. The ‘mechanics’ of the years of Dada art or Futurism – and with the Russians – greatly impressed us.”³⁷ There is little reference to the 1920s avantgarde films in Reitz’s main body of writings. Instead it is his early films, in particular *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit*, which pay homage to and

³³ W. Ruttmann, “Art and the Cinema”, p.6 and p.8.

³⁴ Walter Schobert, “The German Film Avant-Garde of the 1920’s. A Short Survey of Its Three Periods”, in W. Schobert, *The German Avant-Garde Film of the 1920’s*, p.12.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ E. Reitz, “Utopie Kino”, pp.25-26.

³⁷ Martin Emele (ed.), “Edgar Reitz on Cinema and Television. The Courage To Be Simple”, *Journal of the Centre for Art and Media Technology*, Karlsruhe College of Design, no. 4, vol. 12, 1994, pp.17-19.

continue the work of the avant-garde filmmakers, and which reveal his own inclinations in making films which demonstrate avant-gardist elements.

Reitz's early film theories can be classified as avant-garde for challenging the very notions criticised by the early avant-garde filmmakers: the imitation of theatre, adherence to conventional formats, overlooking film's own technical capabilities. His films are equally concerned with movement and variation, and seek to depart from plot as a means of extending images into time. Reitz points out in "Utopie Kino" that new technical forms have to be found for transporting film content, which are not necessarily plot related.³⁸ Reitz's search for a new cinema, one which has not yet been acknowledged, relies on the acknowledgement and integration of film technology in order to develop new aesthetic forms, but also on the acknowledgement and integration of technology to develop a new venue for the effective presentation of a new film form.

³⁸ Ibid., pp.19-20.

1.3. "Wort und Film"

The concepts developed in Reitz, Kluge and Reinke's essay "Wort und Film" (Word and Film)³⁹ highlight the significant role Sergei M. Eisenstein and Bertolt Brecht play as models to the authors. While this is already apparent in Reitz's "Definitionen", it becomes clearly obvious in "Word and Film". Although the authors make no reference to Brecht, the terminology they use and the concepts they develop are so similar, if not at times identical, that a comparison is inevitable.

The similarities between Brecht's criticism of conventional theatre and Reitz's criticism of conventional cinema have already been mentioned in the section "Definitionen". Both propose suggestions which necessitate a departure from conventional dramaturgy, artificial continuity, conventional narrative forms and genres, and subsequently passive viewing. The concepts proposed in "Word and Film" develop from the same basis, focusing on the role and possibilities of language.

The authors of "Word and Film" emphasise the importance of applying montage not only to the image in film, but also to the word, which for them constitutes dialogue, voice-over commentary and inter-titles. The basis of the essay is that film is not purely a visual medium, and that the tendency to "impose upon [it] the aesthetic ideals of the classical arts (which, in this context, could be said to include still photography) ... robs film of its specific means of expression."⁴⁰ Siegfried Kracauer is an exponent of this classical view, stating in the Preface to his book, *Theory of Film*, that "film is essentially an extension of photography and therefore shares with this medium a marked affinity for the visible world around us."⁴¹

The authors' criticisms and suggestions here correspond to earlier, influential theories put forward by S. M. Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori

³⁹ Edgar Reitz, Alexander Kluge, Wilfried Reinke, "Word and Film", trans. by Miriam Hansen in, *October*, vol. 46, 1988, pp.83-95.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p.87.

⁴¹ Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film. The Redemption of Physical Reality* (London: Oxford University Press, 1978), p.ix.

Alexandrov in their “Statement on Sound”,⁴² and by Brecht in his essay “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre”.

In “Statement on Sound”, Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandrov voice their concern regarding the recourse to naturalism in commercial film after the introduction of sound: “an incorrect understanding of the potential of the new technical invention might not only hinder the development and improvement of cinema as an art form but might also threaten to destroy all its formal achievements to date.” They claim that *montage* is “the principal (and sole) method which has led cinema to a position of such great influence,” and therefore call for the principle of montage to be applied to sound as well as image “for the further development of cinema”.⁴³

Sound, treated as a new element of montage (as an independent variable combined with the visual image), cannot fail to provide new and enormously powerful means of expressing and resolving the most complex problems, which have been depressing us with their insurmountability using the imperfect methods of a cinema operating only in visual images.

The *contrapuntal methods* of structuring a sound film not only does not weaken *the international nature of cinema* but gives to its meaning unparalleled strength and cultural heights.⁴⁴

In “Word and Film” Reitz, Kluge and Reinke similarly acknowledge word and image as independent forms of expression – a shared concept amongst the New German directors, especially Jean-Marie Straub and Danielle Huillet. This challenges the role attributed to word and image by commercial film, where they merely supplement one another in the more significant role of telling stories. While Eisenstein could only refer to concepts, the authors here have the advantage of being able to refer to concrete examples of the contrapuntal use of sound and image in the works of avant-garde European film *auteurs* such as François Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, Louis Malle and Michelangelo Antonioni, who paved the way for the use of sound to create polyphonic effects (*polyphone Wirkungen*) and to achieve an epic multiplicity of layers (*eine epische Mehrschichtigkeit mehrere Tonebenen*):

⁴² S.M.Eisenstein, Vsevolod Pudovkin and Grigori Alexandrov, “Statement on Sound” (1928), in Richard Taylor (ed.), *S.M.Eisenstein. Selected Works. Writings, 1922-34*, vol. 1, (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), pp.113-114.

⁴³ Ibid, p.113.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.114.

The current movement in filmmaking, which can be observed on an international level, points toward an emancipation of film sound, in particular of verbal language. These films make it difficult to determine whether speech is subordinated to action, image to speech, or action to theme, or vice versa. The films as they are elude this kind of hierarchical definition.⁴⁵

According to the authors, the audience's desire to "sit and stare" is the chief reason why sound has been adopted as a mere accompaniment to image in commercial films. The spectators' preference for passive viewing has encouraged films to continue using language which they have heard a hundred times before in the media and everyday life. A reversal of this situation, therefore, relies entirely on the audience's willingness to accept a more active role in film viewing.

Likewise, it is the demand of the audience for coherence and superficial continuity which makes every film conform to the model of the novella. This, the authors believe, has prevented cinema from developing its "epic" possibilities, a term, which "in addition to its conventional meaning ... invokes the particular connotations of Brecht's concept of epic theatre," as pointed out by the translator of the essay, Miriam Hansen.⁴⁶

In order to tear the spectator from his or her passive role, Brecht suggests a further step to Eisenstein's contrapuntal use of sound. He advocates a "radical separation of the elements" (*eine radikale Trennung der Elemente*). Brecht believed that by refusing to "fuse" together the arts into an "integrated work of art" or "*Gesamtkunstwerk*", "the great struggle for supremacy between words, music and production ... can simply be by-passed."

So long as the expression 'Gesamtkunstwerk' (or 'integrated work of art') means that the integration is a muddle, so long as the arts are supposed to be 'fused' together, the various elements will all be equally degraded, and each will act as a mere 'feed' to the rest. The process of fusion extends to the spectator, who gets thrown into the melting pot too and becomes a passive (suffering) part of the total work of art. ... *Words, music and setting must become more independent of one another.*⁴⁷

⁴⁵ E. Reitz, et. al., "Word and Film", p.84.

⁴⁶ Ibid, pp.84-85; Miriam Hansen, footnote 3, p.84.

⁴⁷ John Willett (ed.), *Brecht on Theatre. The Development of an Aesthetic* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), pp.57-58.

This “politics of separation”,⁴⁸ a term coined by Colin MacCabe in reference to Brecht, is transposed here by the authors of “Word and Film” and applied to film:

The analytic capability of the camera might afford additional perspectives on the subject matter which would go beyond subjective experience. Thus we would have an accumulation of subjective and objective, of literary, auditory, and visual moments which would preserve a certain tension in relation to each other. This tension would make itself felt, among other things, in the gaps which montage created between the disparate elements of filmic expression. In layering expressive forms in such a manner, the film would succeed in concentrating its subject matter in the spaces between the forms of expression. For the material condensation of expression does not happen in the film itself but in the spectator’s head, in the gaps between the elements of filmic expression. This kind of film does not posit a passive viewer “who just wants to sit and stare.” ... The combination of verbal, auditory, and visual forms and their integration through montage enable film to strive for a greater degree of complexity than any of these forms in isolation. At the same time, the multiplication of materials harbors all the dangers of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total work of art).⁴⁹

The rejection of the supremacy of image over word in film leads the authors of “Word and Film” to reject “on the one hand, the formalism of experimental film (whose experiments do not seek any new experience but rather aim to perpetuate a metaphysical ‘state of transition’) and, on the other, the superficial naturalism of narrative film – this kind of cinema will never be able to compete with the great tradition of literary language.”⁵⁰ The rejection of the former is poignant here, for it also means a departure from the early experimental works of Reitz, which like the early avant-garde films, focus predominantly on the image and the possibilities of camera, colour and montage. While these films can also be regarded as experiments in the contrapuntal use of image and electronic music, they do not concern themselves with language and text, which is the focus of attention here. This rejection of the “formalism” of experimental film marks a change in the direction of Reitz’s filmmaking career. With his first feature film *Mahlzeiten* (1967), Reitz demonstrates an awareness of the use of language through inter-titles, dialogue and voice-over commentary, in line with the suggestions made in “Word and Film”.

As a further exploration of the possibilities of language in film, Reitz, Kluge and Reinke suggest the insertion of written titles. This again corresponds with Brecht’s call in the theatre for the projection of titles onto a screen. The purpose of using

⁴⁸ Colin MacCabe, “The Politics of Separation”, *Screen*, no. 4, vol. 16, 1975/76.

⁴⁹ E. Reitz, et. al., “Word and Film”, p.87.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

“inter-titles” in the theatre, explains Brecht in his essay, “Anmerkungen zur Dreigroschenoper” (“Notes to the *Threepenny Opera*”), is firstly to make redundant the role of dialogue as the only means of forwarding the inward movement of a play. Secondly, the projection of text onto a screen, according to Brecht, confronts the audience with yet another art form, one which requires them to read. In this way, the audience have to develop multiple skills in observing, listening and reading to collect information from various sources, a procedure to which Brecht refers to as “complex seeing” (*komplexes Sehen*).⁵¹

The orthodox playwright’s objection to the titles is that the dramatist ought to say everything that has to be said in the action, that the text must express everything within its own confines. The corresponding attitude for the spectator is that he should not think about a subject, but within the confines of the subject. But this way of subordinating everything to a single idea, this passion for propelling the spectator along a single track where he can look neither right nor left, up nor down, is something that the new school of play-writing must reject. Footnotes, and the habit of turning back in order to check a point, need to be introduced into play-writing too.⁵²

In “Word and Film”, Reitz, Kluge and Reinke refer to the same twofold purpose of inter-titles: firstly to involve the spectator in a more active role, and secondly to introduce a literary language, which requires a form of complex seeing:

The result [of written titles] is an overlay of filmic events with the inner voice of the reading spectator – the spectator has to assume a more active role. The language of written titles, which does not assume any particular voice and thus cannot really be attached to characters within the diegesis, is even further removed from the filmic events than any conceivable form of voice-over. This greater distance, however, gives it an affinity with literary language. The increased participation of the spectator, in turn, creates a peculiar identification of the meaning of this language with the visually concretized events of the film.⁵³

The authors claim that the role of dialogue in narrative cinema, a term they use to refer to commercial film and literary adaptations, suggests that narrative events relate to each other as an organic whole, and that drama is still possible – a concept which they reject both here and in “Definitionen”. Taking Antonioni as their inspiration, they suggest that instead of using dialogue to explain the inner movements of a film or to supplement the image track, dialogue should be regarded as a medium of reflection. In this way, dialogue can make visible the invisible: the

⁵¹ B. Brecht, “The Literarization of the Theatre (Notes to the *Threepenny Opera*)”, in J. Willett (ed.), *Brecht on Theatre*, pp.43-44.

⁵² Ibid., p.44.

thoughts and feelings of the protagonists.⁵⁴ This concept plays a significant role in the filmmaking style of both Reitz and Kluge.

While Brecht encouraged the use of inter-titles to relieve dialogue of its role in developing the plot, the authors of “Word and Film” consider a more filmic element for this purpose: the voice-over. They advocate the use of a documentary film device in the genre of feature film. In line with Reitz’s concept of an analytical film, which combines all film genres, and Kluge’s concept of the “Mischform” which combines documentary and feature film genres, they advocate the use of voice-over in fictional genres to stylise an event or to produce a mutual distancing effect – again a concept which plays a major role in their own filmmaking style.

⁵³ E. Reitz, et.al., “Word and Film”, p.91.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp.89-90.

2. Experiments in Avant-Garde Film

Reitz's films can be loosely divided into three categories: his short experimental industry films and adverts in the early 1960s, his "feature" films in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, and his epic *Heimat* films in 1984 and 1992. Although these films are widely diverse in structure, format and genre, they nevertheless share one common thread: Reitz's relentless pursuit in experimenting with the boundaries of film form and his search for a new venue to cater for these new films. This central aspect of his film work has been widely neglected in film criticism because critics have focused not on the unusual forms of these films, but rather on their content.

The films which are analysed in this chapter represent a cross-section of Reitz's early work, demonstrating his interest in unconventional forms at every stage in his early filmmaking career.

2.1. *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit*

As well as demonstrating Reitz's skill in the art of montage and cinematography, *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit* also serve to symbolise what Reitz believes is the essence of cinema and its future. In his essay "Die Zukunft des Kinos im digitalen Zeitalter", he defines film as the expression of both concepts "speed" and "communication". He points out that film owes its existence to the increased speed of mechanical events. Real forms of presentation, as seen in the theatre, variety show and the circus do not rely on the technology of speed for their existence; only cinema relies on the aesthetic of "sequential perception" of 24 images per second.⁵⁵

It is therefore speed which has made possible the existence of cinema as well as all the other technical forms of communication: car, aeroplane, telephone and radio. It is this basic acknowledgement that compelled Reitz to make *Kommunikation*, a film he decided to make when his eyes were opened to the whole world of technical communication which rely on speed. He discovered this world during the shooting of

⁵⁵ Edgar Reitz, "Die Zukunft des Kinos im digitalen Zeitalter", in Andreas Rost (ed.), *Der zweite Atem des Kinos* (Frankfurt/M: Verlag der Autoren, 1996), pp.116-117.

his 45 minute documentary *Post und Technik*, which was commissioned by the German Federal Post in an effort to inform the public of the extent to which the post had moved with the times and modernised its form and speed of transport and therefore communication.

In both films *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit* Reitz highlights the progress in speed and technology of new forms of communication. He does this not only by depicting these in the films, but also by manipulating the speed of the films, which themselves are a technical form of communication. For this reason, *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit* are Reitz's best examples of his predominant interest in montage and cinematography.

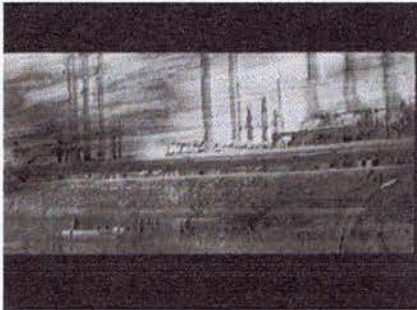
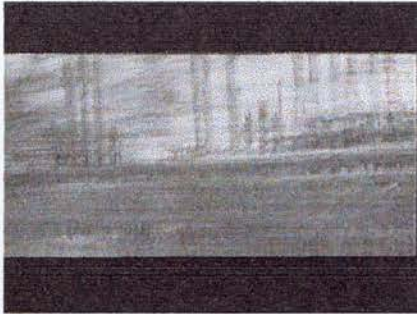
In "Definitionen" Reitz writes that montage has to be taken into consideration at all three stages of filmmaking: in the writing of the script, during shooting and finally in the editing room.⁵⁶ With regard to the first stage of filmmaking, both *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit* are based on musical scores instead of a scenario. Therefore they do not rely on verbal chronology but, rather like the avant-garde films of the 1920s, on the free rhythms and speed of music, in this case electronic music composed by Josef Anton Riedl.

When shooting both films, Reitz creates his own form of montage by constantly altering the relationship between the camera and its subject. The camera pans, tilts and zooms towards and away from its subjects at different speeds. It slips in and out of focus and frames objects at unusual angles. If the camera is still, then objects move in front of it: they are blown or thrown or move in and out of frame at different speeds. Should both the camera and its subject be still, then the picture blinks to make the subject appear and disappear rapidly. This variation in the relationship between the camera and its subjects accentuates the film's dynamic effect, offering viewers not only an assortment of images but also a variety of ways of capturing these on camera.

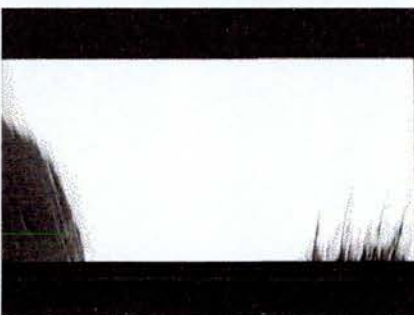
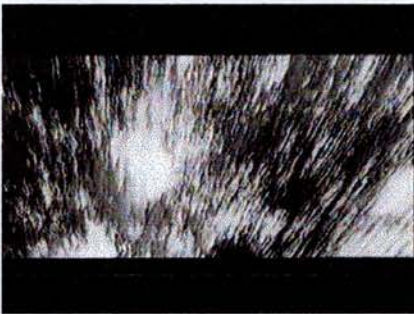
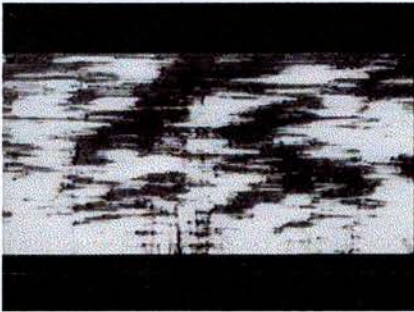
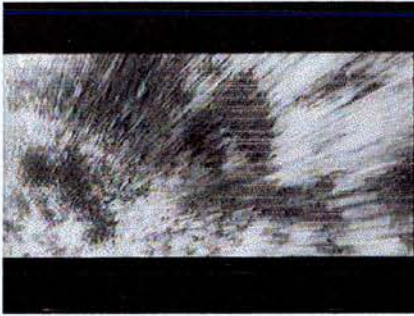
⁵⁶ E. Reitz, "Definitionen", p.23.

In *Geschwindigkeit*, a film inspired by Fernand Léger's dictum, "let the landscape be blurred with the speed of an express train", Reitz takes this experimentation one step further by devising three new technical processes: a new camera which allows its recording speed to be altered, and two processing techniques which allow the random selection and reassembling of single frames from a chronologically photographed sequence.⁵⁷ The result is streaky shots of buildings and landscapes as well as indiscernible shots of black or white patches representing trees and skies caught on camera at extreme speed.

Geschwindigkeit



⁵⁷ I. Scheib-Rothbart and R. McCormick, "Liberating Humanity and Film", p.248.



Finally, the repetition of sequences, the distortion and multiplication of images within one frame, the splitting of a frame into two or eight using a kaleidoscope effect as well as experimentation with colour serve to illustrate the endless possibilities offered by montage at the final stage of filmmaking – in the editing room. They also demonstrate Reitz's relentless attempts to create images in ways which viewers cannot experience in real life or in the theatre:

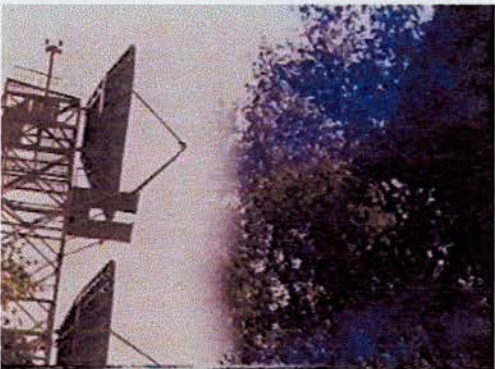
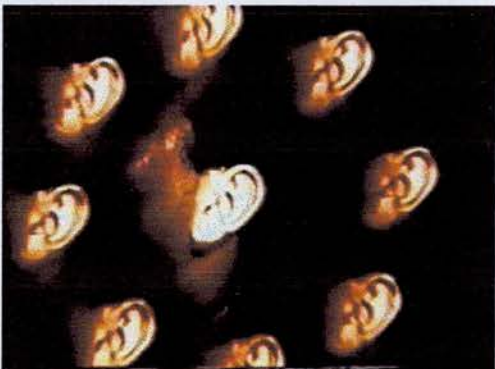
Die Montage erfolgte nach musikalischen Gesichtspunkten, das gesamte Formenalphabet der Avantgarde wurde durchbuchstabiert. Der Grundgedanke: Geschwindigkeit ist eine Erfahrung unserer Zeit, der moderne Straßenverkehr erfordert vom Menschen eine neue, schnellere Wahrnehmung. Entsprechend arbeitete der Film mit kurzen Schnitten: Filme für Autofahrer – und jeder ist heutzutage Autofahrer – sehen anders aus als Filme für Fußgänger.⁵⁸

In *Kommunikation* a woman runs from a distance towards the camera, before she reaches it the shot is re-played with the woman in the distance running again towards the camera. The accompanying sound track is that of a tape recorder rewinding. The repetition of this sequence and other shots throughout the film is a technique made possible only through the use of audio-visual technology unique to film and music; a technique frequently used by the avant-garde filmmakers, fascinated by the technical possibilities offered by film. By adopting this technique Reitz opposes linear chronological development within the film.

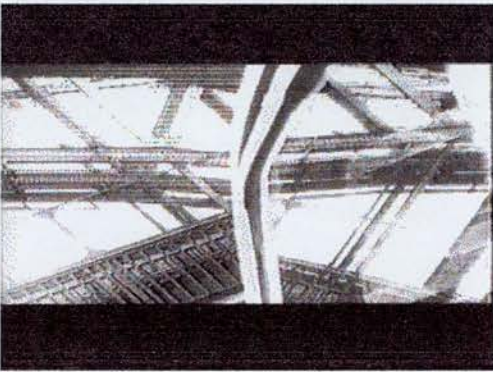
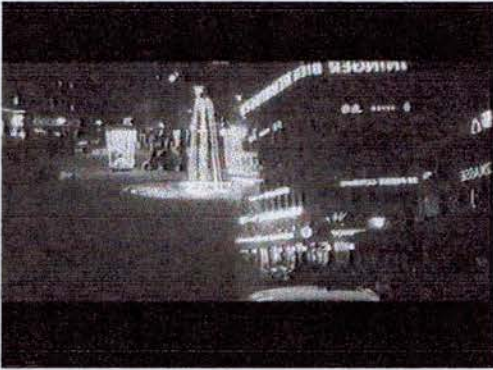
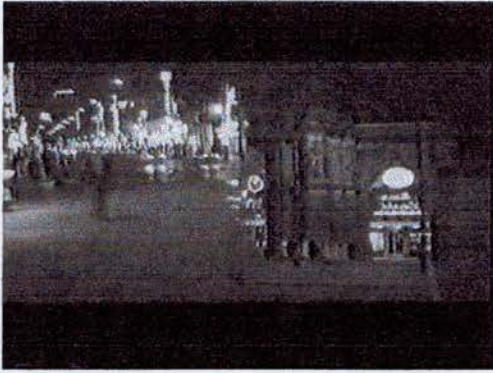
In *Kommunikation* the image of an ear is multiplied into three, five and eight reproductions within the same frame. In *Geschwindigkeit* Reitz splits the frame in order to show two separate film sequences simultaneously. Sometimes he splits the frame to create a kaleidoscopic effect of six triangles, each showing a different film. These effects demonstrate that the term montage can also be applied to the assemblage of several shots within one frame simultaneously, as well as the assembly of several shots consecutively. In *Kommunikation*, Reitz superimposes shapes – in particular circles – very similar to those used by Ruttmann in his *Lichtspiel Opus 1*. The effect reveals that images are only technical representations and therefore subject to further technical distortions.

⁵⁸ M. Töteberg (ed.), *Edgar Reitz*, p.242.

Kommunikation



Geschwindigkeit



In these films Reitz also demonstrates that montage can be applied not only to images, but also to sound. The electronic “music” in *Kommunikation* consists of the distorted sounds and signals of technical equipment. These sound like the screeching noise of a microphone or amplifier being switched on, the indiscernible sound created when a radio tuner moves quickly through all the frequencies without tuning into any particular station, radio beeps, distorted words played back in slow motion, fuses burning, symbols chiming and the echo sounder or sonar of a submarine. In his article “Die Zukunft des Kinos im digitalen Zeitalter”, Reitz points out that the intention behind the sounds used in *Kommunikation* was to create not only a visual

but also an acoustic encounter with the world of telecommunication. 10,000 telephone conversations were recorded simultaneously at a switch board and were then worked into the music composition by Josef Anton Riedl.⁵⁹

Both *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit* serve to distinguish the unique capabilities of the medium of film from those of the theatre, through the manipulation not only of sound and image, but also time. The viewer is confronted by an incredible assortment of images in a very short time span. Reitz explains that he created cuts in the film which are shorter than a single shot: "Ich versuchte Schnitte zuwege zu bringen, die kürzer sind als das einzelne Bild."⁶⁰ It is claimed that the films consist of 259⁶¹ and 347⁶² shots within a short length of 11.5 and 13.5 minutes respectively. Using a VHS recorder, however, it is only possible to count 186 and 185 shots within the two films respectively. This is because most shots barely last a second, lending the film an incredibly fast tempo: a tempo which left the audience of the 1960s feeling disorientated and nauseous. The films resemble video clips, leaving the viewers with only an impression of the themes they cover. They are not disturbing for the post MTV and internet generation of today, who have grown up to accept such speed as part of their reality. Reitz exaggerates this element of speed by making it the subject of *Geschwindigkeit*, and by recording in fast motion.

Kommunikation marks a departure from conventional filmmaking not only in its format and montage of images and sound, but also in its experimentation with colour. The film depicts black and white, sepia and colour photographs, and lends these dominant tones of red, blue or green using colour filters. Sometimes two filters are used simultaneously to portray one part of an image in blue while the other part is in red, evoking the similar play with colours found in Ruttmann's *Lichtspiel Opus 1*. Reitz explains that colours were filtered from the images in order to break free from traditional film technology: "Wir haben unzählige Versuche gemacht, aus den

⁵⁹ E. Reitz, "Die Zukunft des Kinos im digitalen Zeitalter", p.125.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.121.

⁶¹ I. Scheib-Rothbart and R. McCormick, "Liberating Humanity and Film", p.248.

⁶² R. Rauh, *Edgar Reitz*, p.55.

damals verfügbaren technischen Traditionen auszubrechen, zum Beispiel indem wir aus den Bildern die Farben herausfilterten.”⁶³

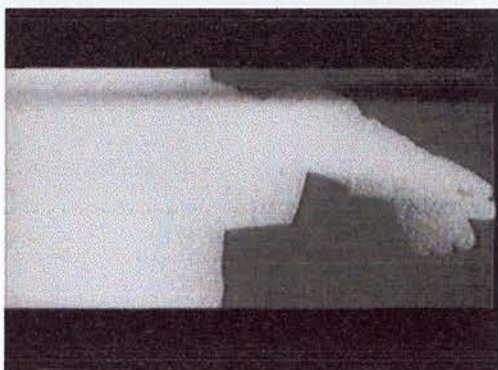
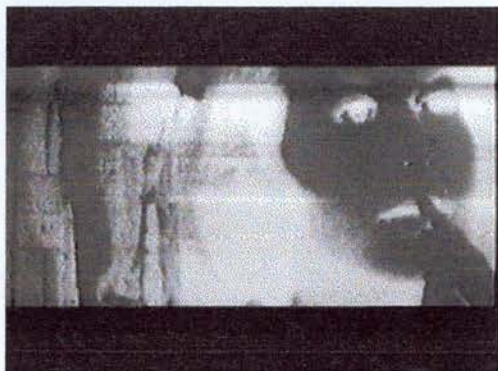
Kommunikation



⁶³ E. Reitz, "Die Zukunft des Kinos im digitalen Zeitalter", p. 121.

Geschwindigkeit proves that colour variation is possible even with black and white film. In this film, Reitz uses over and under exposure to lend a dominant tone of light or dark to the shots. He also uses inversion - a technique used by Hans Richter in his *Filmstudie* – to present images in white or light tones, which would otherwise appear in black or dark tones, and vice versa.

Geschwindigkeit



Reitz explains the theme of *Kommunikation* as “the interrelation of man and technology, the idea of translating human experiences into technical experiences and codes”.⁶⁴ In the first part of the film he focuses on the organs of human communication using a montage of photographs and film footage of men and women’s mouths, eyes, ears, hands, legs and feet. The camera then shows the physiology of these organs in its extreme close-up shots of a mouth speaking, an ear listening, the head nodding and understanding, another mouth replying, hands stretching out for a hand shake and finally feet and legs walking. In avoiding medium or long shots of the human body, Reitz makes it clear that he is not interested in focusing on human beings as characters in this film.

In the second part of the film, the camera gradually moves on to show technical means of communication, focusing on machines which communicate over longer distances and in ways that reach larger audiences. An unusual shot of a bridge which leads the spectator into what seems like a cloud in mid air is a precursor to a new form of communication, one that uses air waves. Reitz emphasises the advantages of technical means of communication by contrasting fixed shots of borders and barriers with moving shots of the sky and means of communication via radio, telegram, telephone and letters transported by aeroplane.

The film, despite its intention to study the “interrelation between man and technology”, ironically creates the impression of a cold, lonely and isolated world, where humans feature less and less, as their basic form of communication is rapidly replaced by technical forms of communication. The aerial shot of people walking, covered with their umbrellas can thus be regarded as symbolic of a nation of people isolated from one another, each an island. The final images in the short film show only machinery and a glimpse of a human shadow in the background. The conclusion of the film on the face of a mannequin is therefore very poignant, emphasising our increasing reliance on machinery and the insignificant role humans play in its day-to-day functioning. Reitz notes this in his discussion with Töteberg:

⁶⁴ I. Scheib-Rothbart and R. McCormick, “Liberating Humanity and Film”, p.248.

Die Avantgarde hat neue Welten eröffnet, aber – das ist ihre Tragik – der Kontakt zum Publikum ist gerissen. Vielleicht hat sie einfach ein zu hohes Tempo eingeschlagen: bis Mitte der siebziger Jahre war Fortschritt gleichbedeutend mit Schnelligkeit. Man erfand eine Formenwelt, die nicht mehr kommunikativ ist.⁶⁵

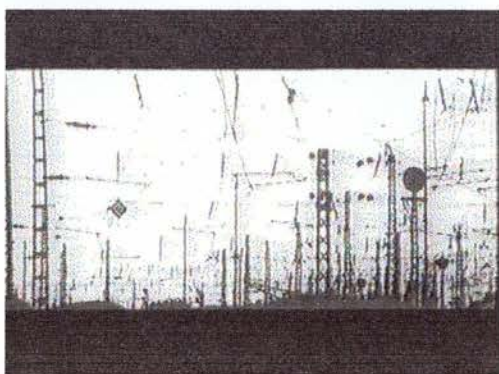
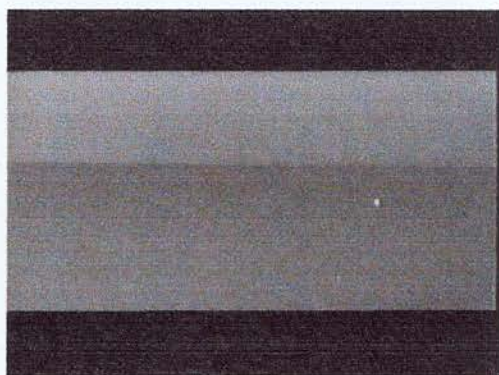
Kommunikation



⁶⁵ M. Töteberg (ed.), *Edgar Reitz*, pp.242-243.

The bleak outlook on the effects of technology is inherent in both *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit*. The latter depicts the intrusion of technology into the natural world, contrasting images of natural landscapes with images of industrial sites, bridges, tunnels and electricity pylons, to the extent that the natural landscape becomes barely recognisable. The curvaceous, undulating forms of nature are replaced by symmetrical and angular railings, wires and bridges. One particular shot effectively captures technology's mutilation of nature in depicting endless numbers of wires crossing between electricity pylons, creating the symbolic allusion of a cemetery.

Geschwindigkeit



The ever increasing absence of the human face and the smooth lines of natural landscape make these films cold and distant. Reitz addresses this at the beginning of his first feature film, *Mahlzeiten*, where his protagonist Elizabeth, looking through her camera at cranes and such like in a ship yard, says in despair “horrible, the only interesting thing in the world is the human face.... Here there are only cranes, lines, inanimate objects ... I love people, faces, humanity, warmth. Nothing is more alive than people.”⁶⁶

Mahlzeiten



⁶⁶ *Mahlzeiten*, 2.42 minutes.

2.2. *Mahlzeiten*

Before making *Mahlzeiten* Reitz announced that his first feature film would not be 'experimental' in its sequence of events and that it would tell a story; something which he had hitherto avoided in his short films: "'Experimentell' wird mein erster Spielfilm in seinem äußeren Ablauf überhaupt nicht sein. ... Was mir im Kurzfilm uninteressant war, 'eine Geschichte zu erzählen', wird im langen Film die eigentliche Arbeit sein."⁶⁷ The film won him the prize for best debut film at Venice and is listed as one of Reitz's most important contributions to the New German Cinema.⁶⁸

Reviews in the German press were less enthusiastic, however. A series of articles criticised Reitz for failing to distance himself from his characters. Wolfram Schütte wrote:

Daß er selbst in die Geschichte emotional verwickelt sei, hat Reitz mehrfach bestätigt. Wenn sie ihm nicht so sehr auf der Haut gebrannt hätte, hätte sie ihn nicht zu diesem Film angeregt. Es ist gewiß nicht von einem Autor zu verlangen, daß er sich vollständig von dem, was er erzählt, distanziert; wohl aber, daß es ihm gelingt, so sehr er in sein Erzählen versponnen sein mag, es auszubilden, es zu artikulieren. Man kann den Eindruck nicht von sich weisen, daß Reitz diese Distanz, die sich in Form ausdrücken müßte, nicht erreicht hat.⁶⁹

Alongside criticism of Reitz's subjective stance towards his characters, the film was most severely criticised for its 'illogical' story. The audience at the time, living in an era when the pill was commonly available and celebrated, questioned why a marriage should break-up as a consequence of the birth of too many children. They felt that Elizabeth's sudden re-marriage to a Mormon was equally illogical.⁷⁰

Reitz defended himself by criticising conventional film for relying on fictional instead of genuine stories; a criticism which he had already made in "Definitionen" by contrasting *auteur* cinema's use of original material with the fiction used in the cinema of ingredients. He points out that in telling a fictional story, details are inevitably created in order to make the story more convincing and to assist the

⁶⁷ Michael Töteberg, "Edgar Reitz", in Hans Michael Bock (ed.), *Cinegraph* (München: edition text + kritik), E.3.

⁶⁸ R. Rauh, *Edgar Reitz*, pp.97-98.

⁶⁹ Wolfram Schütte, "Fader Nachgeschmack", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 4.5.1967. In R. Rauh, *Edgar Reitz*, pp.99-100.

development of the drama. However, genuine stories, or stories based on genuine material, do not necessarily follow a logical chronology.

Das Filmpublikum ist von den meisten Filmen gewohnt, anzunehmen, daß jedes Ereignis der Handlung einen bestimmten Grund hat. Daß alles etwas in Bezug auf das Ganze bedeutet. Das liegt daran, daß die meisten Filme eben nicht wirkliche Geschichten erzählen, sondern erfundene Geschichten. ... Man wird unwillkürlich eine Geschichte so erfinden, daß jede Einzelheit etwas beweist, was man die Zuhörer glauben machen möchte.⁷¹

The critics' evaluation of *Mahlzeiten* shows that coherence is indeed valued above authenticity – a preference which Reitz rejects in “Word and Film” as a device which encourages passive viewing. He created *Mahlzeiten* with the intention of using a genuine letter sent to him in 1964 as the final scene in the film – this is the same letter which is read out by Elizabeth at the end of *Mahlzeiten*. The film evolved from 30 short stories or incidences which lead up to the writing of this letter.

Mahlzeiten may have adopted the conventional 90-minute film format, it may have been introduced by Reitz as his first non-experimental film, it nevertheless does not follow main stream film conventions in the constellation of its story. Reitz alludes to this in an interview with Frieda Grafe and Enno Patalas. In response to a query regarding *Mahlzeiten*'s genre, Reitz replies that the film, similar to his favourite films - Louis Malle's *Zazie* and François Truffaut's *La Peau douce* - cannot be categorised into a specific genre, it can only exist under the all embracing category film: “alles Filme, für die eine sichere Gattungsbezeichnung sich nicht angeben läßt, es sei den, man sagt überhaupt: Film.”⁷²

Indeed, Reitz combines feature with documentary and experimental filmmaking techniques, providing ample opportunities for his audience to distance themselves from the subject matter of the film. For this reason it is all the more surprising that Reitz has been criticised for being too emotionally involved with his characters.

Elements of documentary film style employed include handheld camera shots, inter-titles, multiple voice-overs and interviews with the characters. The film consists of

⁷⁰ R. Rauh, *Edgar Reitz*, p.100.

⁷¹ Edgar Reitz, “Einige Fragen und Antworten zu ‘Mahlzeiten’”, *Presseheft zu ‘Mahlzeiten’*, 1967. In R. Rauh, *Edgar Reitz*, pp.101-102.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.128.

very few establishing shots, and these are used only for official occasions such as Rolf's job interview and Elizabeth and Rolf's Mormon baptism. At such occasions the spectator loses his otherwise privileged access to the characters' intimate space which is regularly invaded by the prying camera, disclosing extreme close-ups of their faces, breasts, hands or feet, but rarely revealing their body in its entirety; a camera style adopted from *Kommunikation*.

Mahlzeiten



Reitz breaks away from the traditions of Hollywood commercial film in abandoning establishing shots, which serve to reassure the audience by informing them of the location and of the characters involved at the beginning of each sequence. Instead, Reitz keeps his audience actively guessing by starting each sequence with extreme close-ups. This way the spectator has to put together the pieces as the sequence and the film develop. In *Mahlzeiten*, the audience assume that they have seen Elizabeth travelling in a train, but the film neither shows an establishing shot of a train nor a medium shot of Elizabeth sitting in a cabin. Instead Reitz focuses on a close-up of Elizabeth's face while landscape can be seen flying past in the window behind her.

Similarly, Reitz rarely begins with a medium shot of two people, establishing where they are positioned in relation to one another. Instead, a sequence usually begins with a close-up shot of, for example, Rolf smiling and looking down. The spectator assumes that Rolf is looking at Elizabeth, and this is only revealed a few moments into the sequence. At one stage the camera reveals Rolf waiting at a railway station. The audience also have to wait before they realise that he is not waiting for Elizabeth or a work colleague, but indeed an attractive young blonde female, with whom he enters a hotel room. As the film avoids giving details, the audience never know how Rolf met this young lady and how long he has had an affair with her. The film is not interested in the plot of their affair, but rather in the couple's *reaction* when they discover that they cannot have sex because the blonde has started her period!

In this respect, *Mahlzeiten* is a very visual film, consisting largely of close-ups and extreme close-ups of the characters' expressions and reactions, while wholly avoiding large amounts of dialogue to explain the characters' actions. In fact Reitz uses dialogue sparingly, and when so, then as a momentary expression of his characters, but never to aid the development of the story. This complies with the theories developed in "Word and Film" to "avoid using spoken dialogue to tell the viewer about the inner movements of the film; dialogue should not serve any narrative purpose, but should be made available as a medium of reflection."⁷³

Mahlzeiten



⁷³ E. Reitz, et. al., "Word and Film", p.90.

Instead of dialogue, Reitz uses inter-titles and voice-over narration to provide the audience with information concerning the film's inner movement. The inter-titles, which are used sparingly, draw the viewer's attention to the members of Elizabeth's family, who are overshadowed by her dominant and more captivating presence. The inter-titles announce the names of Rolf and Elizabeth's babies as they are born, and distinguish the three phases in Rolf's married life: "Rolf um sein Leben", "Rolf um sein armes Leben" and "Rolf aufgegeben". They draw attention to the downward spiral in Rolf's life, culminating in his suicide. The film gives away Rolf's suicide in its intertitle, because its concern is more with the portrayal of the suicide – the longest sequence – than its news. The suicide is therefore not used for dramatic tension or action, but rather, in a matter-of-fact way, as a reflection on Rolf's characteristics: it is awkward and clumsy and requires several attempts before it succeeds.

There are three voice-overs in the film. Two belong to Elizabeth and Rolf and are used to represent their inner-monologues, revealing much about their characters. The main one belongs to an objective third person narrator, whose role is to inform the viewer of the development of events and of the characters' thoughts and feelings – it is actually narrated by Reitz.⁷⁴ For example, the camera focuses on Rolf climbing the stairs on the way to his lecture while the voice-over narrator, quite objectively, informs the viewer of Rolf's background and reason for wanting to study medicine: "As a child Rolf had had infantile paralysis. He lived with his mother. His father had died early. The mother had stayed single because of her son. Rolf has always wanted to be a doctor. A childhood full of illness had made him an idealist. He wants to be a doctor so that he can help humanity and fight misery."

To further strengthen the documentary feel of the film, Reitz uses interviews with Elizabeth and her friend Irina, which allow the audience to meet the characters supposedly outside film time. The interviews juxtapose the girls' conflicting opinions of one another, thereby requiring the audience to maintain their objective stance.

In her interview, Elizabeth is very confident about herself and her relationship with Rolf: "He is there for me, I'm there for him. I have my home, I know where I belong, whom I can talk to and confide in. You belong to someone and I think every woman should marry. ... But I'm absolutely against living the way Irina does." At this point the camera cuts to an extreme close-up of Irina's smiling face, moving from her lips to her nose and eyes. Elizabeth continues: "...Girls like her are really very unhappy." At this point Irina looks very happy. "She is always searching...". Irina's smile disappears, she starts to look very sad and finally starts to cry, the camera constantly explores her face: "... a man she can be true to and find peace with. And every time she thinks she's found him – something about him disappoints her terribly...". Close up of Irina's sad and teary eyes: "...and she breaks off the relationship. Then she looks for another man, to forget her disappointment. And something or other turns up. That's why these women are so unhappy. They're always searching. So are many men, later on. And that's repulsive, even for these girls." Extreme close-up of one of Irina's eyes: "They don't know what to do."

Seven minutes later the third person narrator informs the viewer that Rolf needs a break, that he is not happy and that he leaves Elizabeth. This contradicts Elizabeth's confident and self-righteous judgement on how others should manage relationships. It exposes Elizabeth's self-centred nature, where on the one hand she boasts and enthuses about her marriage to Rolf and her role in Rolf's life, while on the other hand knowing very little about his inner world. At one point in the film, after the couple are re-united, they stand in front of a mirror, Elizabeth remarks, "man and woman as one", while he replies, "yes, but not all the time!"

By showing these contradictions, Reitz prevents the audience from identifying with any one character, thereby forcing them to become more critical. During Rolf's absence, Elizabeth tells her friends at one of her gatherings, "Everything a woman does so as not to have children is unhealthy. Working out the safe days seems so vulgar. Rolf feels the same." Yet ten minutes later the narrator informs the spectator that four months after the birth of the third child, Elizabeth is pregnant and afraid of

⁷⁴ Carole Angier, "Edgar Reitz", *Sight and Sound*, vol. 6, Winter 1990-91, p.35.

the responsibility of another child. As the doctor will not help her reverse the situation, Rolf intervenes and the foetus is aborted.

The film meanders between feature, documentary and experimental styles, sometimes bordering on the surreal. At times, the film abandons voice-over and dialogue in order to observe close-up shots of Elizabeth and Rolf. While some of these shots can still be worked into the loose framework of a story, such as shots of Elizabeth and Rolf sitting in the meadows balancing orange peel on their head, or staring at one another in their flat, others remain inexplicable. These include a horrified Elizabeth discovering fish dying on her bathroom floor, and on a separate occasion, Rolf in a hotel room, piercing a toothpick through flies which he has earlier killed, or in some cases half-killed. These scenes again defy the development of a linear chronology, lending the film a particular mood, symbolic of turbulent times for the couple. It is the culmination of these haphazard scenes which distinguish Reitz's film from conventional feature film where every object, every movement every word has to aid the development of a close knit story.

Mahlzeiten





Reitz also avoids a smooth aural transition from one shot to another: exposing what seems to be non-diegetic music as diegetic music. The tune which is heard most regularly in the film is a gentle flute music which is played when the camera focuses on events in Elizabeth and Rolf's flat, and which is taken for granted as non-diegetic music. 19 minutes into the film, however, Elizabeth asks Rolf whether he can hear music, when they are sharing an intimate moment together. The next shot reveals a girl playing the flute in the cellar. Elizabeth stands listening behind her. When she finishes, Elizabeth remarks that she has often heard the flute from her flat, but was unsure of its source.

Reitz uses *Mahlzeiten* as a springboard to tackle themes of love and marriage and as a vehicle to experiment with innovative combinations of sound, image and genre. The result is a film which leaves its audience with an *impression* of a story; a film which does not allow itself to be remembered in a chronological order and which leaves ambiguity over many of its scenes. Reitz confronts his audience with more questions than answers. Unlike mainstream Hollywood film, he resists summarising the film in a way which ties all loose ends and which allows the viewers to leave the cinema with a unanimous conclusion. It is his best example of an analytical film as defined in "Definitionen", and of the possibilities of applying montage to image,

sound and music in rejecting an “integrated work of art” as conceptualised in “Word and Film”:

Die Liebes- und Ehechronik von Rolf und Elisabeth, die mit ungewollten Schwangerschaften, Ehebruch, Arbeitskonflikten, Elisabeths Bekehrung zum Mormonentum, Rolfs Selbstmord und Elisabeths Wiederheirat dramatisches Potential birgt, wird in fragmentarischem Stil als Collage bildlicher und textlicher Mitteilungen auf verschiedenen Ebenen konstruiert: dokumentarische Einschübe, Kurzmonologe der Figuren, subjektive und allwissende Voice-over-Kommentare aus verschiedenen Erzählperspektiven – hier banal und unterkühlt, da soziologisierend, dort bewusst verkitschend.⁷⁵

With this film Reitz discovers and reveals that his interests lie more in dealing with human psychology than with plot and action. He confirms this in a discussion on *Mahlzeiten* with the director of *Tätowierung*, Johannes Schaaf:

Mich interessiert ein Film um so mehr, je weniger es darum geht, Handlung wiederzugeben. Ich möchte so weit kommen, daß Handlung überflüssig wird und ich möchte etwas anderes finden, was Spannung erzeugt. Was mir spannend vorkommt: wenn ein Mensch Wunschträume hat, dann finde ich alles spannend was er tut, sich den Wunsch zu erfüllen.⁷⁶

With *Mahlzeiten*, the audience are given an impression of the 1960s not through laborious scenes showing the development of events at the time, rather through their intimate encounter with the protagonists. Similarly, Reitz’s later films *Die Reise nach Wien* and *Stunde Null* – to mention two of his better known works – are mainly concerned with the protagonists’ “Wunschträume” despite being set in the historical time of the National Socialist Regime and the end of the Second World War. Although the films deal, to some extent, with the politics of the time, they are more interested in observing the effects of these times on the characters’ psychology. This becomes a crucial element in making *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat*.

Mahlzeiten may follow the conventional 90-minute format, it nevertheless is unique in its unusual relationship with Reitz’s films, *Die Kinder* (1966) and *Fußnoten* (1971). The latter is a film of five episodes made of unused material from Reitz’s earlier films *Die Kinder* and *Mahlzeiten*, giving the impression that the children from the first film grow up to become the adults in the second film. *Fußnoten* serves literally as footnotes to both films, filling in the gaps in childhood and adult life of

⁷⁵ Nikolas Hülbusch, “Edgar Reitz”, in *Reclams elektronisches Filmlexikon* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun., 2001).

the characters from *Die Kinder* and *Mahlzeiten*. This is a departure from the conventional concept of a film sequel, and calls to mind Brecht's concept of complex seeing: "footnotes, and the habit of turning back in order to check a point, need to be introduced into play-writing too."⁷⁷ This unique relationship between the three films marks the beginning of Reitz's interest in epic forms and the branching of themes. This interest in film's structure is developed radically in his projects *VariaVision* and *Geschichten vom Kübelkind*.

⁷⁶ Johannes, Schaaf, "Wie sie filmen – wie sie filmen möchten. Gespräch zwischen Edgar Reitz und Johannes Schaaf", *Film*, no. 9, September 1967, p.21.

⁷⁷ B. Brecht, "The Literarization of the Theatre", p.44.

2.3. *VariaVision* and *Geschichten vom Kübelkind*

Reitz is one of few filmmakers to have written a large body of theory alongside his filmmaking. He has, however, always insisted that the former is subordinate to the latter. In an interview with Barbara Bronnen and Corinna Brocher he points out that he is always ready to change his theory should practice teach him better: “Man kann nicht von der Theorie her leben. ... Man kann nur Versuche machen, und wenn der Versuch gelingt, dann geht etwas von der Theorie in die Praxis ein, ins eigene Verhalten.”⁷⁸ He demonstrates this in his attempts to explore new film structures and, correspondingly, venues capable of presenting these films.

VariaVision (1964) is one example of Reitz’s attempts to realise his theories of departing from the conventional set-up of the *Lichtspieltheater*, and in demonstrating that, according to his own definition of an *auteur*, he is indeed truly technically minded. *VariaVision* was an assignment for the German Federal Railroad. With it Reitz created an auditorium, which challenged the theatre in every respect. There was no stage, no curtains and there were no rows of seats. There was no fixed time for the beginning of the “performance”. There was also no specific length of time in which the spectator had to stay, because there was no conventional dramaturgy: no beginning, no middle and no end. Instead, sixteen screens were hung in four rows of four. Spectators could either stand or walk under the screens according to the patterns painted on the floor: white paths denoted walking, while green circles encouraged the spectators to remain standing. Sixteen continuous films of various formats were projected onto two cinemascope and two standard screens in each of the four rows simultaneously. The project explored the possibilities of an alternative set-up to conventional cinema, as well as a truly *radical separation of the elements*: film, music and literature. Electronic music, composed by Josef Anton Riedl, could be heard from the 24 loud speakers in the ceiling and recordings of literature, read by Kluge, could be heard from the six loudspeakers in the floorboards. The sixteen continuous films presented various themes associated with travel.

⁷⁸ B. Bronnen and C. Brocher, *Die Filmemacher*, p.101.

The project demonstrated Reitz's concepts of continuous and simultaneous projection of film. It also demonstrated the possibilities of working with film without necessarily relying on conventional dramaturgy. The spectators did not have to watch the sixteen films in any order, and so could create their own film from the images *they* had seen depending on their arrival time at the exhibition, their length of stay and the order of viewing the sixteen screens. In this way, as Reitz later explains, the viewers may have experienced the same show, but they will have seen a different film: "Die Zuschauer haben am Ende zwar dieselbe Show gesehen, aber nicht denselben Film."⁷⁹ The project therefore experimented with the possibilities of *complex seeing*, offering viewers the freedom to choose where to look. Reitz points out that this freedom exists in driving, when the driver has a whole wealth of material to observe, should he or she wish to do so.⁸⁰

Variavision was Reitz's first attempt in turning cinema-going into an event, something spectacular rather similar to very early vaudeville cinema, offering a variety of proceedings to be experienced by a large collective in their own individual ways. The occasion also allowed Reitz to prepare his audience for a more casual approach to film viewing, one where the viewer could determine when to view a film, how long to spend viewing a film and which film to view out of a choice of sixteen.

Geschichten vom Kübelkind (1969/1970) is Reitz's first episodic film, created together with Ula Stöckl. The film consists of 23 episodes, and has a total length of 260 minutes. The episodes are self-enclosed and vary between half a minute and half an hour. The film's structure is very similar to Kluge's concept of "Dramaturgie der Kürze":

⁷⁹ Christiane Peitz, "Das Kino meiner Träume. Ein Gespräch mit Edgar Reitz über seine Utopie vom europäischen Kino der Zukunft", *Weltwunder der Kinematographie*, April 1997, p.66.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

Wie stellt man Konzentrate her, montagefähige, in sich geschlossene Kürzel, eine Art Kurzschrift der Erfahrung, sogenannte Miniaturen. Man kann in dieser mikrostrukturellen Erzählweise ganze Filme erzählen. Dieser Ansatz liegt den Ein-Minuten-Filmen, der Miniaturtechnik (bis drei Minuten), den in Ulm hergestellten sogenannten Schlagerfilmen (Sequenzen in der Länge von Schlägern, nach deren Musik bemessen), aber auch einer Reihe von in sich ruhenden Sequenzen, das heißt aus Miniaturen bestehenden Langfilmen zugrunde.⁸¹

In a documentary on Reitz, the director states that it was his love for the cinema and his disappointment at not getting his foot in the door, which persuaded him to quote all of cinema's genres in this film. Consequently each of the film's 23 episodes feature a different genre, ranging from costume drama, Chicago gangster film and mythology to science fiction and operetta.⁸² There is no continuity between the episodes, neither in chronological dramaturgy nor in film style, allowing the episodes to be shown in any particular order.

Geschichten vom Kübelkind

Costume drama



Chicago gangster film



⁸¹ Alexander Kluge, "Ein Hauptansatz des Ulmer Instituts", p.5.

⁸² Reitz in Gretl Brand and Rainer Ostendorf (directors), *Liebe zum Kino. Edgar Reitz. Ein Porträt*, (WDR, Arte, Inter Nationes, 1993).

Medieval mythology



Operetta



The 23 episodes have in common only the protagonist, the *Kübelkind* (dustbin child), which, according to Reitz, means abortion or afterbirth in Viennese dialect. Each episode focuses on attempts to educate or train the *Kübelkind*, whose birth from slippery afterbirth into a dustbin is portrayed in one of the episodes. Needless to say, the *Kübelkind*, who takes on an adult form from birth, cannot be tamed, and each episode bears witness to her unruly ways: pulling up her bright red dress to expose her naked midriff, spelling out genital and anal associated swear words, practising as a prostitute or eating her partner.⁸³

A year prior to making it, Reitz, it seems, had already contemplated the possibilities of a film such as *Kübelkind* in his essay “Der Film verläßt das Kino”. In this essay he proposes the concept of a “free film”: a film which can be exchanged like books and records. It was his disappointment with the conventional venues for the exhibition of film, cinema and also television, which led Reitz to the concept of a film which

relies on neither for its distribution; at the time video's significant role as serious competition for both media was not known. Reitz's concept of the free film was based on the premise that the same technology which had enabled directors to film anywhere could also enable them to project their film anywhere: "Ebenso wie wir inzwischen mit unseren Kameras die Ateliers verlassen können, wie wir an jedem beliebigen Platz mit geringem Aufwand filmen können, so können wir heute ohne weiteres an jedem beliebigen Platz Filme vorführen. ... Film ist nicht mehr an das Kino gebunden."⁸⁴

A year later, Reitz set out to test the possibilities of tempting film out of the cinema by becoming the landlord of a cinema pub together with his partner at the time Ula Stöckl. Here they offered *Geschichten vom Kübelkind* alongside films from the early days of cinema on the pub menu. *Geschichten vom Kübelkind* was ideal for such a venue as the episodes were short, allowing the customers regular breaks to discuss the films. Also, the location within a pub seemed to respond directly to Reitz's essay "Utopie Kino" where he proposes a venue for film where viewers can enter at any time and where they can smoke and have access to refreshments. Indeed, showing the films in a pub meant that viewers did not have to leave the venue at all after the film was over; Reitz had created a venue attractive enough to the audience even after the film was over.

Rauh points out that the idea of a cinema pub was not uncommon at the time, however, Reitz was original in offering his customers, on entry into the bar, coupons not only for wine and beer, but also for film minutes. The idea behind the venue was that the customers could choose which episode, or indeed which film to watch. Once a decision was made, customers were to add together their vouchers, each one worth one minute of film time. Reitz's time as the landlord of the cinema pub did not last longer than one year; the voucher system proved impractical and the method of selecting films difficult.

⁸³ R. Rauh, *Edgar Reitz*, pp.133-134.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp.44-45.

The cinema pub venue, nevertheless, offered Reitz the possibility to depart not only from a fixed film schedule, but also from a fixed time of viewing and from the formal arrangement of seats facing a screen on stage. As a result the venue offered a more relaxed atmosphere for film viewing. The shift in decision making from the hands of the schedulers to the viewers, along with the paratactic structure of the film with its self-enclosed episodes brought him a step closer to creating viewing habits and programmes similar to ones created and offered by television. In this respect *Geschichten vom Kübelkind* can be regarded as a transitional link between Reitz's early avant-garde concepts and the aesthetic structure of his highly successful works offered on television.

Chapter 2: *Heimat. Eine Chronik in elf Teilen.*

1. *Heimat* and Avant-Garde Film Style

Reitz's avant-gardist approach to his subject matter in *Heimat* may seem subtle in comparison to his earlier radical works. *Heimat* neither demonstrates the streaky pictures, speedy innovative cinematography and montage-style of *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit*, nor is it interspersed with the erratic, hand-held camera shots, voice-overs and interviews of *Mahlzeiten*, where Reitz combines the genres of documentary, experimental and feature film to approach his subject analytically. This necessarily raises the question whether *Heimat* can at all be regarded as a continuation of Reitz's avant-gardist film style developed in the early 1960s.

1.1. The Structure of *Heimat*

Heimat's structure demonstrates once again that Reitz's interest in exploring a new film lies firstly in the realms of film presentation. Despite its television funding, *Heimat* was made not as a series for the television, but rather as Reitz has continually highlighted, as a film for the cinema. In this respect, its epic 15.5 hour length can be regarded as a challenge to cinema's theatrical form of presentation. At film premieres around the world, *Heimat* was presented 8 hours daily over a weekend. This unique form of presentation combines two significant features of Reitz's concept of a new cinema. On the one hand, the continuous presentation of film is a concept Reitz introduced in "Definitionen" and explored in his project *VariaVision*, arguing that film, as an audio-visual art form, can transcend the limitations confronting theatre as a form of live entertainment: "Im Gegensatz zu einer Theaterinszenierung ist eine Filmaufzeichnung in jedem beliebigen Augenblick aufführbar. Die Aufführungsform, die sich aus diesem Zusammenhang anbietet, ist die kontinuierliche pausenlose Vorführung von Filmen der verschiedensten Längen."¹ Secondly, the presentational form of *Heimat* echoes Reitz's call for films to challenge new media in presenting their art as an event:

¹ E. Reitz, "Utopie Kino", p.23.

The standard film, 90 or 100 minutes long, has developed under the influence of theater, and of a special kind of literature. Now it's losing its character of being an 'event' under the impact of the new media: video, cassettes, home consumption, the profusion of television channels, etc. I think the cinema now needs new forms of 'events'.²

Heimat's two-day presentation with intervals for refreshments and discussions – sometimes involving the director or a member of the crew or cast – offered a spectacular occasion where the audience were able to interact with the creators of the film. The collective and festive experience lent as much to the enjoyment of the event as the film itself. In terms of presentation, *Heimat's* exploration of the technical capabilities of film remains a unique feat in the world of cinema:

Was vorher nur mit Spott und Hohn abgetan worden wäre – jeweils acht Stunden Film an zwei Tagen! –, das erwies sich jetzt als eine eigene Qualität. Es zeigte sich, daß gerade die epische Länge dem Filmerlebnis eine ganz neue, noch nie gekannte Qualität eröffnete. Die Ereignisse auf der Leinwand verschmolzen mit den eigenen Erlebnissen und Erinnerungen der Zuschauer. Es waren zwei Tage außer Raum und Zeit.³

In order to succeed with a film of such length, the question remains as to whether Reitz has compromised his avant-gardist film style. It cannot be denied that *Heimat's* cinematography consists of steady, well-composed long sequences, edited to create a slow, discernible narrative pace:

Lange Einstellungen, ruhige Schwenks, gemächliche Fahrten: die Kinematographie im Rhythmus des ländlichen Lebens. Die Landschaft des Hunsrück in Totalen, Bilder wie gemalt. Großaufnahmen von Gesichtern, in denen man lesen kann. Erzählkino, detailgetreu und gradlinig, ohne Brechungen oder Exkurse.⁴

This gentle rhythm, however, was devised not to slow down the pace of the presentation, but rather to allow Reitz to engage in a dramaturgy which would support a film 15.5 hours in length. *Heimat's* slow pace and epic length have allowed Reitz to unfold in great detail a variety of unrelated events in the daily lives of his characters, thereby creating an open-ended dramaturgy:

Es war mir von vornherein klar, daß die übliche Dramaturgie, die ja eine Höhepunkts-Dramaturgie ist, hier nicht angewendet werden darf und kann, weil dadurch ein Rhythmus entstünde, der zum schnellen Ende führen müßte. Es war deshalb mein Hauptbestreben, Zeit zu gewinnen, also mich selbst und den Zuschauer in eine Wahrnehmungssteuerung zu bringen, in der es egal wird, wie viele Stunden das dauert.⁵

² Reitz in Gideon Bachmann, "The Reitz Stuff", *Film Comment*, 4 (1985), pp. 16-17.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Malte Ludin, "Wo der Misthaufen noch friedlich dampft", *Deutsches Allgemeine Sonntagsblatt*, 16.9.1984.

⁵ R. Rauh, *Edgar Reitz*, p.185.

Few films dare to decelerate to this extent for such an incredible length of time. In this respect *Heimat* shares the same extremities as *Geschwindigkeit*: while the latter storms through 13 minutes, the former meanders over a record-breaking 15.5 hours.

From a cinematic point-of-view, *Heimat*'s most avant-gardist feature is its structure. This is all too often overlooked or underestimated due to the film's enormous success on television, as a result of which it has largely been considered as a television serial.⁶ As a television serial, however, *Heimat* can hardly be considered revolutionary in a medium which thrives on segmentation. Four years earlier Rainer Werner Fassbinder completed his opus *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, a 15.5 hour film in 14 parts. Little was made of its mammoth length because it was intended for the television and was incorporated neatly into the medium's programme slots: except for the first and last episode, *Berlin Alexanderplatz* consists of 12 equal parts of 60 minutes. Although *Heimat* was ironically more successful than *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in the medium of television, the fact remains that it was made for the cinema. Reitz has consistently reaffirmed that neither of his *Heimat*-films are to be understood as series: they are ONE film, similar to a novel with many chapters.⁷ Reitz's staunch refusal to conform to television's standards is reflected in *Heimat*'s structure: it is divided into 11 unequal parts. Reitz cut each episode according to the requirements of the material: they vary between 58 minutes (five parts), 1 hour 20, 1 hour 30, 1 hour 40 (two parts), 1 hour 59 and 2 hours 13: "Wegen der technischen Unterschiede und der zerstückelten Sendezeit ließ sich dieses Erlebnis im Fernsehen dann nicht mehr wiederholen."⁸

In length, detail, variety of characters, themes, events, and historical, cultural and technical information, *Heimat* resembles the scope of a novel even more so than Fassbinder's rendition of Alfred Döblin's *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. Fassbinder's film is

⁶ *Heimat* is referred to as a television *series*, however, the term *serial* has been adopted in this dissertation in line with John Ellis' definition of the latter as a programme which, unlike television series, does not run indefinitely: "The serial aims towards a conclusion which is a number of weeks distant. Like the massive three-decker novels of the nineteenth century, the TV serial multiplies incident along the way. It uses its characters, plays around with the possible permutations of relationships and situations. Its span is often that of generations." John Ellis, *Visible Fictions. Cinema: Television: Video* (London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1982), p.123.

⁷ Edgar Reitz in interview with Olav Anders Øvrebø, "Home is not a place", <http://home.eunet.no/~oovrebo/film/reitzeng.html>, 16.02.2001.

⁸ R. Rauh, *Edgar Reitz*, pp.200-201.

both theatrical and cinematic, yet, unlike *Heimat*, demonstrates few of the possibilities of the novel. The former uses cinematic devices: superimposition, inter-titles and music; and theatrical forms: composition, dialogue and lighting, to vividly portray the physical and psychological world of its protagonist Franz Biberkopf. Despite its use of voice-over and inter-titles to integrate passages from Döblin's novel, the film forsakes the opportunity to explore the entire scope of the novel in its 15.5 hour duration, focusing instead on Franz Biberkopf's inner world. *Heimat*, on the other hand, demonstrates that film too can deal with a wealth of varied information over a long period, offering its audience a melange of geographical, historical and cultural themes. *Heimat* is a realisation of Reitz's call in 1968 for "a 500-minute film with a plot similar to a novel, with epic dimensions, a genre which cinema cannot produce."⁹ It is the departure from conventional film length in *Heimat* which has made it possible to present such a wealth of information: "When we knew that this would be a film of over 16 hours in length, we no longer had to consider any conventions or observe any rules."¹⁰

⁹ Edgar Reitz, "Der Film verläßt das Kino" (1968), in *Liebe zum Kino*, p.46.

¹⁰ Franz A. Birgel, "You can go home again: An Interview with Edgar Reitz", *Film Quarterly*, Summer 1986, p.6.

1.2. The Film Format: Black-and-white and Colour

The alternation between black-and-white and colour film in *Heimat* demonstrates Reitz's continual interest in the visual and technical aspects of film – an interest he developed in his very early films *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit*. While *Heimat* is predominantly in black-and-white, constant bursts of colour serve to remind the viewer that this is not an old black-and-white movie. Each of the eleven parts begin with a 23 second opening introducing the title and credits in colour. With the exception of part one, this is always followed with a colour sequence where the hands of the chronicler Glasisch-Karl can be seen selecting black-and-white, sepia and sometimes colour photographs, which recapitulate events in the film. The films then resume their predominantly black-and-white format until they reach present time, 1982, in part eleven *Das Fest der Lebenden und der Toten* (The Feast of the Living and the Dead), which is in colour. Black-and-white scenes are used in this final part only for flashbacks to the past. Part nine *Hermännchen* (Little Hermann) is the only exception to this rule. It refers to Reitz's first true love in the love scenes between Hermann and Klärchen, which are immortalised and stylised in black-and-white, and distinguished from everyday events, which are portrayed in colour.

Heimat's dominant black-and-white format is regularly shattered by segments of colour within a shot, by the inter-titles which are usually in gold, or by red and blue filters which serve to lend particular scenes an atmosphere of intense warmth or cold respectively. On their first night in Schabbach Eduard and Lucie have to walk through Mathias and Katharina's bedroom in order to reach their own. The lack of passion between Mathias and Katharina in bed is conveyed in a cold blue tone. This serves to exaggerate the stark red tones of the next scene, where Lucie's excitement at the thought of power and wealth is intensified through the use of red filters, when portraying her naked in bed with Eduard.¹¹ Similar effects are used to lend Anton's Optics Factory a clinical and sterile look with the use of blue filters.¹² The device is highly visual, distinguishing scenes from one another for their particular moods.

¹¹ Part 2, 58 minutes and 4 seconds. All subsequent time references to *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat* will appear without the words "hours", "minutes" or "seconds". 00.34 will mean 34 seconds, 43.21 will mean 43 minutes and 21 seconds and 1.43.34 will mean 1 hour 43 minutes and 34 seconds.

¹² Part 9, 1.31.49.



The alternation between black-and-white and colour film is one of the visual devices to attract the most criticism in *Heimat*. While some critics, like Kaes, have appreciated this feature as Reitz's means of commenting on the scenes: "the sudden switches from black-and-white to color let the filmic discourse forsake its purely representational function for a moment and become self-reflexive",¹³ the majority have criticised the device. Geoff Brown captures the general response to this format when he writes that "the alternations between black-and-white and colour photography cause problems. ... There are some objects, like the ghastly *memento mori* jewelry, that clearly benefit from this, though eggs in a frying pan do not; overall, the device irritates."¹⁴

Reitz explains that the device was used to a certain extent to distinguish between the past and the present narrative moment:

The entire classical period of cinema history and the idea of what is perceived as beautiful on the screen – that has a tradition in the black-and-white cinema of the past. Since the film deals with the past and the present, it was important for us to also use these methods, the old narrative form in black-and-white.¹⁵

¹³ Anton Kaes, "Germany as Memory. Edgar Reitz's *Heimat*", in A. Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat*, p.177.

¹⁴ Geoff Brown, "History in the palm of your hand", *Times*, 15.2.85, p.11.

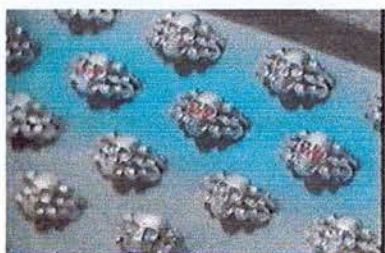
¹⁵ F. A. Birgel, "You can go home again", p.6.

Reitz says that he used colour in the way an author would use underlining or italics to emphasise particular words or paragraphs:

The change between black-and-white and color is very free, not according to an abstract principle, but more according to the concept of affection for the images in the individual cases. One could say that the color material has the characteristic of underlining, or printing individual passages of a novel in italics.¹⁶

This once again demonstrates Reitz's attempts to develop a new filmic language which has the expressive capabilities of literature, by taking advantage of the technologies available to it.

Brown's criticism of this alternation between black-and-white and colour formats reveals his conventional expectations that only objects of historical significance like the "ghastly *memento mori*" jewellery should be emphasised in colour. Reitz's selection, however, is not based on the significance of objects or events historically, but rather the significance of objects and events in capturing a particular mood. He points out that the splashes of colour in *Heimat* were used "intuitively, to point up an emotion or stress a change of scene, rather than according to any strategy."¹⁷ For this reason the scene where Maria and Otto's face as well as the pan with the fried eggs change to colour while the surrounding room remains in black-and-white, is significant because it emphasises the chemistry and warmth between the two. It is a beautiful moment, as well as an appetising scene.¹⁸



¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ J. Ardagh, "Fassbinder, Herzog and Reitz's *Heimat*", p.301.



¹⁸ Part 4, 34.13 minutes.

The same device is used critically when, under the instructions of their captain, a newsreel team, including Anton, film the shooting of some prisoners at the front. In the scene prior to this the captain of the team tells the cameraman “not feature films, but war newsreels are the real art of the twentieth century. ... We manage to imprint the war into people’s souls more forcefully than the power of their own eyes ever could. We achieve that with our camera.”¹⁹ Correspondingly Reitz portrays the film crew filming at the front in black-and-white, while the subject of their film - soldiers shooting prisoners - are presented in colour, thereby emphasising the captain’s point.²⁰



Reitz combines and alternates between black-and-white and colour film, challenging the system of continuity adopted by conventional film on the one hand, while boldly demonstrating why film cannot learn from theatre on the other. Whereas the work of art of the former relies on real people and objects on stage, the work of art of the latter consists of celluloid which can be endlessly manipulated and altered.

The experimentation with colour formats is another device which goes back to Reitz’s early filmmaking. Reitz used colour filters in *Kommunikation* to lend his shots dominant tones of red, blue or green, while in *Geschwindigkeit* he used special camera effects of speed, inversion and strobe to create as much optical variety and colour tone using only black-and-white film. It is the “movement of these optical phenomena, the temporal development of one form out of the other”, according to the avant-garde filmmaker Walther Ruttmann, which places cinematography firmly amongst the visual arts: “It is visual art with the novelty that the root of the artistry cannot be found in a final result, but in the temporal growth of one revelation out of

¹⁹ Ibid., 7 minutes.

the other.”²¹ Reitz’s alternation between black-and-white and colour film in *Heimat*, as well as enriching the film’s visual language, also produces movement of optical phenomena in refusing to adhere to one format.

²⁰ Ibid., 8.28 minutes.

²¹ W. Ruttmann, “Art and the Cinema”, p.8.

1.3. Editing and Montage

Unlike the scenario *Heimat* which begins in 1980 and comprises of flashbacks to 1919 and subsequent years,²² and with the exception of part eleven which comprises of several flashbacks, *Heimat* develops in a linear chronological order from 1919 to 1982. Taking account of the film's opening scenes, however, this linear chronology is interrupted briefly at the beginning of each new episode when Glasisch-Karl summarises events in the film to-date using photographs. These scenes are set after Glasisch's death in 1982, when his ghost returns to Schabbach as a young man. They therefore break the film's linear chronology while also shattering the film's illusion of a composite reality. Taking into consideration that *Heimat* was made to be shown in two parts in the cinema, these opening scenes seem superfluous and raise questions regarding their purpose. These questions have not been raised, because the opening scenes have complied with the format of a television serial, as defined by Ellis, in reminding the viewers each week of events and characters from previous episodes. They therefore have been accepted as part of the film's televisual format, a purpose which is only secondary to its real intent, as discussed later in the section "Camera and Memory".

Events after these opening scenes follow a loose linear chronology. The 1920s, 30s and 40s are allotted approximately nine hours film time from parts one to eight, while the remaining three decades are represented in parts nine to eleven in the years 1955, 1967 and 1982. Some events are recounted using not only the exact date through inter-titles, but also the exact day, lending the film its feel of an oral narrative. Paul Simon returns from the First World War on *Friday* 9th May 1919. 27 years later, he returns from America on Monday 13th May 1946, while his son Anton Simon returns from the Second World War on Saturday 10th May 1947. The film takes on its documentary tone in providing the dates for historical events such as Hitler's torch procession on 30th January 1933 and his declaration of war on 1st September 1939.

²² Edgar Reitz and Peter Steinbach, *Heimat. Eine deutsche Chronik* (Nördlingen: Greno, 1984). Out of print.

While events follow a linear chronology, they do not endorse an artificial continuity through a cause-and-effect relationship. The sequence of events in *Heimat* reflect the unpredictability and “strangeness” of the sequence of events in real life. Reitz notes this in his diary at the beginning of *Heimat*’s production, after observing a day’s bizarre sequence of events which he believes he cannot match in fiction: the arrival of his cast, the death of Grandfather Molz, the hurried prayer in front of an open coffin, being sought by his assistant director:

Ich muß unbedingt lernen, dieses niemals planbare fremde Nebeneinander von Ereignissen zu verstehen und erzählerisch nachzuvollziehen. Die Ankunft von Schauspielern, der Tod des alten Mannes, ein unter Zeitdruck absolviertes Gebet ... Wenn man heterogenes oder einander fremdes Material konstruieren will, kommt man nie auf solche Fremdheiten, wie sie durch Beobachtung des Lebens ins Bewußtsein gelangen. Eine der wesentlichen künstlerischen Aufgaben scheint mir die Beschreibung von Fremdheit zu sein. Material, Ereignisse, Geschichten, die einander fremd sind, zueinander zu führen, die Fremdheit zu empfinden, die Fremdheit darzustellen, die Fremdheit als Stimulanz für die Nerven, als Indiz für die Nerven, als Indiz für Leben.²³

The sequence of events in *Heimat* demonstrate Reitz’s concept of vertical chronology: a cross-section of a multitude of events which occur without any immediate or obvious relation to one another. In part one Paul occupies himself with assembling radio sets after returning from the war. His brother Eduard pursues photography. An American pilot, Rolf Windhäuser, makes an emergency landing on the fields where Mathias and Paul are working. Eduard searches for gold in the Hunsrück streams. The body of a naked woman is discovered in the forest. A marten kills three of Mathias’ chickens. Paul says he is going for a beer but never returns. In part two a French woman rides into Schabbach on horseback. Eduard watches ambulance men carry a dead man from a Berlin brothel, and so the events continue in chronological order while refusing to complement one another in developing one main story. A technique which, as Kaes puts it, “allows Reitz to use narrative enigmas that remain unexplained even at the end of the film.” With reference to the discovery of the naked woman, whose murder remains unresolved, Kaes points out: “The atmospheric effect – a sense of mystery and insecurity – is more important to the film than action sequences, which in the classical narrative would inevitably lead to the discovery of the murderer. Reitz leaves the murder unresolved and thus lends a

²³ M. Töteberg (ed.), *Edgar Reitz*, p.156.

disquieting dimension to everyday reality.”²⁴ This open-ended, episodic dramaturgy caters for the film’s epic length, one that Reitz envisaged as early as 1967:

Der Spielfilm ist durch seine kommerziellen Bedingungen, durch die Beschränkung auf neunzig Minuten, festgelegt. Die Arbeit an einem Film ist von diesen Bedingungen nicht zu lösen. Man wird, durch die Bedingungen des Spielfilms gezwungen, nie darum herumkommen, Handlung als Transportmittel für die Gedanken zu verwenden. Man wird sich nie von den dramaturgischen Bedingungen, die Handlung setzt, freimachen können. Mich interessiert zum Beispiel überhaupt nicht die große dramaturgische Linie. ... Heute würde ich mir wünschen, ich hätte freies Geld für zwei Jahre. Ich würde dann unter großer Disziplin jede Woche fünf Minuten Film drehen. Ich würde meinen Interessen folgen, würde ganz Verschiedenes machen, zum Beispiel in einer Woche einen Text von Joyce verfilmen, ein ganz kleines Stück aus dem “Ulysses”, in der nächsten Woche würde ich einen technischen Zusammenhang beschreiben, in der nächsten Woche würde ich eine Frau beschreiben, die mir irgendwo über den Weg gelaufen ist. Ich habe die Vermutung, daß die Kontinuität in der Person des Autors sich durchsetzt.²⁵

Reitz’s interest in a vertical chronological order has its roots in the filmmaking approach adopted at the Ulm Film Institute where unplanned incidences were considered as important as the main scenes being filmed. Reitz explains that these scenes are beautiful because they are incidental: “Anstrengung macht blind, Konzentration auf einen bestimmten gewollten Inhalt macht blind für die Ästhetik der Nebensachen. Es ist auffällig, daß Bilder, in denen kein Sinn enthalten ist, von großer Schönheit sind.”²⁶ He assigns the flop of his film *Der Schneider von Ulm* (1978) to the fact that, together with his crew, he focused too intensely on the main subject of the film, overseeing the aesthetic of incidental details: “Das Ergebnis war, daß wir völlig unempfindlich wurden für das, was am Rande passierte, für die vielen kleinen inspirierenden Ereignisse, Erlebnisse, Vorgängen außerhalb der inszenierten Bildgrenzen und die kleinen Regungen in den Gesichtern der Nebendarsteller, der Komparsen.”²⁷

As a contrast to *Der Schneider von Ulm* Reitz adopts his earlier approach to filmmaking in *Heimat*, allowing himself to remain open to all possibilities and suggestions. He explains in his production notes that he defends the “unimportant against the important, people against systems, stories against history and the unconventional against convention.”²⁸ While he does all of these in *Heimat* in

²⁴ A. Kaes, “Germany as Memory”, p.174.

²⁵ “Wie sie filmen – wie sie filmen möchten”, p.22.

²⁶ M. Töteberg (ed.), *Edgar Reitz*, p.137.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

observing history from below in a multitude of stories told using unconventional methods, he also goes further in defending figments of the imagination and the ethereal against the real. Reitz's interest in making visible in film what is invisible in real life roots back to his early experimental film *Geschwindigkeit* in which, using montage and camera tricks, he creates a speed in the film, which is not possible to experience in real life:

Die Kamera wird auf diese Weise ein Instrument, mit dem wir uns unmittelbar im Bereich der Phantasie oder der Erinnerung bewegen können. Das Gleiche gilt für die *Möglichkeiten der Montage*. Die Aufeinanderfolge mehrerer Aufnahmen kann so manipuliert werden, daß beliebige *Eingriffe* in die Zeitabläufe größerer Zusammenhänge und in die Chronologien der Ereignisse geschehen.²⁹

While he does not manipulate the speed of the camera to delve into the realms of fantasy in *Heimat*, he uses montage and camera techniques such as the alternation of film formats to make visible the invisible. Part two, *Die Mitte der Welt* (The Centre of the World), shows Katherina's visualisation of Berlin. The black-and-white scene, where the gossiping villagers inform Katharina of the French traveller and her lavender oil bath, merges into a colour scene - a surreal image indicating that this is not reality, but rather Katherina's somewhat limited imagination of Berlin: Schabbach with the Brandenburg gate at its centre and Eduard, as an urban dandy, sporting a thin moustache and a straw boater.³⁰



²⁹ E. Reitz, "Utopie Kino", p.27.

³⁰ Part 2, 22.28.



The same technique is used to demonstrate Martha's imagination of the various countries her husband Anton has to walk through on his return journey to Schabbach from the Second World War. On each occasion, a black-and-white close-up of Martha's face looking into the distance merges with a long shot in colour of Anton on the long road leading out of Schabbach with fields on either side. Instead of the Hunsrück in the distance, however, Martha visualises various monuments in the background, typifying the country she is imagining, while Anton too appears in the national dress of the respective countries. For Turkey she visualises a building typical of islamic architecture, consisting of a dome and towers with palm trees. This forms the backdrop to the long road leading out of Schabbach, on which Anton walks in Turkish national costume. For Greece, the ancient ruins of the acropolis can be seen in the background, while for Tyrol it is the Alps.³¹

³¹ Part 8, 12.54, 1.14.26 and 1.26.47.



In part eight *Der Amerikaner* (The American) Ernst, suffering from fever and hiding in a French farmer's attic, faces his own subconscious who introduces itself as "Heimweh". This is depicted by portraying the actor who plays the role of Ernst as "Heimweh", while an actor wrapped up in bandages plays the role of the character Ernst. "Heimweh" appears in different areas of the attic without walking across the room, demonstrating that he does not exist in reality. These surreal digressions from the film's reality demonstrate Reitz's refusal to remain chained to any one narrative tone.

As well as delving into the realms of the subconscious, Reitz goes further in actually portraying ghosts in *Heimat*. In part one, the image of Paul's friend Helmut Legrand, who was killed in combat in Russia, is superimposed in colour over a black-and-white scene of the Simon family and friends, gathered in the kitchen to see Paul after his return from the First World War. As the viewer sees Helmut from the perspective of Paul, the only one who can see him in the room, it is assumed that the image is Paul's imagination or a ghost, which then disappears. The scene, as Kaes also points out, "makes the viewer skeptical about accepting the strong physical presence of everyday life in the village as the only reality."³²

The epic, discursive everyday prose of the film is interrupted again and again by short bursts of poetry. Despite its illusion of reality, this filmed version of daily life is, at a closer look, extremely artificial. It unscrupulously mixes genre styles and conventions: the documentary with the hallucinatory and the dreamlike; the chornicler's observations in black and white with the poet's reveries in color.³³

Part eleven presents all the characters, who have died during the film, in the prime of their life. They are gathered together in the town hall awaiting Maria who steps out of a brilliant ray of light wearing a white summer dress and holding a quilt, as if she were making the bed at home in Schabbach in her younger years. Eight minutes of film time is given to Maria acknowledging and greeting all the ghosts from the characters in *Heimat*. The film leaves her standing next to Otto, observing Hermann and Gisela, as the former contemplates the acoustics of the mine for a concert.

³² A. Kaes, "Germany as Memory", p.177.

³³ Ibid.

Reitz's decision to take his viewers into the realm of the spiritual has been widely criticised as an "incomprehensible"³⁴ and "not entirely necessary"³⁵ sudden change in style and tone of the film; a tone which Kaes, who finds the scene "vulgar" and "tumultuous", believes "undermines any spurious idyllic façade" and therefore runs counter to a classic Heimatfilm.³⁶ Critics have understood this as Reitz's attempt to match Fassbinder's purgatory at the end of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. They perceive it as a "regrettable wilful destruction" of Heimat, a "tasteless finale in which Reitz shoves his own alter ego between the carefully developed relationship of the film figures and viewers":

Leider fällt ein Wermutstropfen in dieses lange Kinoglück: die letzte Stunde. Aus unbegreiflichen Gründen ändert Reitz Stil und Tonart. Mit dem falschen Ehrgeiz, es dem Purgatorium am Ende von Fassbinders *Alexanderplatz* gleichzutun, zerstört er mutwillig die Stimmung, verrennt er sich in Geschmacklosigkeiten und schiebt er sein alter ego (also sich) plötzlich und unmotiviert zwischen die so sorgsam aufgebaute Beziehung von Filmfiguren und Zuschauer.³⁷

The assembly of the ghosts in *The Feast of the Living and the Dead* is incomprehensible to critics because they have tried to compare it to Fassbinder's finale in *Berlin Alexanderplatz*. The two endings have little in common except for broaching the subject of the unreal. Whereas Fassbinder's purgatory reflects the pain and torment of Franz Biberkopf's soul, Reitz's feast celebrates a last goodbye to the living *and the dead* in *Heimat*. It is Reitz's way of taking leave of the past and showing respect for things and people which no longer exist. His inspiration to deal with this theme came from the French documentary filmmaker Chris Marker's *Sans soleil* on which his essay "Das Unsichtbare und der Film" is based. In this essay, Reitz refers to Marker's criticism of the Western consumer world in comparison with Japanese traditions, and points out that this is an important message for filmmakers:

³⁴ Peter Buchka, "Ein Kinoereignis, das alle Grenzen sprengt. Der 16-stündige Film *Heimat* von Edgar Reitz zum Abschluß des Münchner Filmfestivals", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 3.7.84.

³⁵ V. Canby, "*Heimat*, a Chronicle of Germany", p.9.

³⁶ A. Kaes, "Germany as Memory", p. 190 and p.167.

³⁷ Peter Buchka, "Ein Kinoereignis, das alle Grenzen sprengt."

“Selbst wenn die Straße leer war, blieb ich bei roter Ampel stehen nach japanischem Brauch, um Platz für die Geister der Autowracks zu lassen. Selbst wenn ich überhaupt keinen Brief erwartete, blieb ich vor dem Schalter der postlagernden Sendungen stehen, denn man muß die Geister der zerrissenen Briefe ehren. Und vor dem Luftpostschalter stand ich, um die Geister der nicht abgeschickten Briefe zu grüßen. Ich ermaß die unerträgliche Eitelkeit der westlichen Welt, die nicht aufhört, das Sein dem Nicht-Sein und das Gesagte dem Nicht-Gesagten vorzuziehen.”³⁸

Reitz attempts to show respect for the “non-being” and the “un-said” in featuring the invisible in *Heimat*: the ghosts of the dead characters in parts one and eleven. He points out that if he does not take proper leave of the past, then history would march on without a memory:

Wenn ich mich von den sichtbaren Dingen nicht würdig trenne, Schmerzen des Abschieds vermeide, dann wird die Wand, die das Leben vom Tode trennt, immer dicker, dann schreitet die Geschichte voran, indem sie ihr Gedächtnis verschließt, wie man die Ohren verschließen kann. Die Wegwerfgesellschaft umgibt sich, ohne es zu wissen, mit den Geistern der weggeworfenen Dinge, die an uns Rache nehmen werden. Film kann ein Mittel der Versöhnung mit diesen Geistern sein.³⁹

This has been rejected by critics much in the same way that the alternation between black-and-white and colour film formats have been rejected as “irritating” because they disturb and detract from the film’s otherwise convincing realism. These “inconsistencies” in film narrative and format, however, demonstrate Reitz’s interest not in developing a consistent, harmonious story, but rather to deal with history and memory, which are themselves fragmented, through the tension in the filmic elements.

³⁸ Edgar Reitz, “Das Unsichtbare und der Film” (1983), in *Liebe zum Kino*, p. 131.

³⁹ Ibid.

2. The Role and Portrayal of Technology in *Heimat*

2.1. Camera and Memory

The use of photography plays a major role in *Heimat*, both thematically and in the film's visual vocabulary. While part one relies on inter-titles to inform its viewers of the current time and location at the outset: "9th May, 1919. A Friday. Paul Simon returned from the World War. For six days he had tramped home from France to the Hunsrück", subsequent parts replace written with visual information. The opening scenes of parts two to eleven present photographs, shown in various ways – neatly ordered in a photo album, spread out over a table, taken down from or pinned onto a notice board, wrapped up in a bundle with an elastic band, shuffled into piles, and hung decoratively like cards on a thread. While these opening scenes serve as an aid for anyone who has not watched, or missed the earlier episodes, their primary purpose is not to summarise the events to date. In fact, for viewers who watch *Heimat* from beginning to end over a weekend at the cinema, or who follow each episode on television or video, these opening scenes disturb the general flow of the film, breaking the illusion of composite reality by allowing one of the characters to step out of film time and look back on and summarise events to date. The fact that these opening scenes are in colour, and that Glasisch's hands and voice remain youthful throughout them indicates that the scenes are set in the future, in 1982, after Glasisch's death.⁴⁰ There is a more significant reason why Reitz interrupts the flow of the film by inserting these opening scenes. Their purpose is to confront the viewers with photographs which encourage the process of remembering.

Reitz's two seminal essays on the theme of remembering, "Die Kamera ist keine Uhr"⁴¹ and "Das Unsichtbare und der Film",⁴² were written during the production of *Heimat*, demonstrating his pre-occupation with this theme while working on the film. They shed light on the purpose of the opening scenes as well as a number of scenes within the film where photography re-surfaces as a filmic subject. Reitz's essay "Die Kamera ist keine Uhr" begins with the comparison of film and memory:

⁴⁰ Glasisch dies in 1982, but his ghost appears as a young man in the final episode of *Heimat*.

⁴¹ Edgar Reitz, "Die Kamera ist keine Uhr" (1979), in *Liebe zum Kino*, pp.106-110.

⁴² E. Reitz, "Das Unsichtbare und der Film", pp.125-132.

Der Film hat vieles gemeinsam mit unserer Fähigkeit, uns zu erinnern. Es ist nicht nur die Möglichkeit, Bilder und Ereignisse aufzubewahren, über die Vergänglichkeit hinweg zu retten, sondern auch die Möglichkeit, Gegenwart und Vergangenheit in einer Weise zu vermischen, daß sie sich durchdringen. Viele machen in unserem Beruf den Fehler, die Filmaufnahme mit der Realität zu verwechseln. Was die Kamera auf dem Film abbildet, ist aber zum Zeitpunkt der Vorführung immer schon Vergangenheit. Der Filmemacher sollte ein Gefühl dafür entwickeln, daß er im Augenblick der Aufnahme bereits das, was die Augen erblicken, was die Ohren hören, in die Vergangenheit versetzt.⁴³

With *Heimat*, Reitz transforms the screen image from present to past. This is already apparent in part one, *The Call of Far Away Places*, when the camera lingers over its subjects, as if waiting for something to happen. Paul runs away in the middle of a conversation with Maria because she mentions to him that Apollonia has always been fond of him; the camera dwells on Maria's surprised expression. Paul stands observing his father's forge, and the camera eagerly captures his brooding face, just as it remains fixed on his figure as it walks down the long road leading out of Schabbach. The camera pauses on the faces of Pauline and Robert Kröber as they look out of Robert's shop window at Eduard being escorted away by the police. It lingers over the gathering of the three families, the Wiegands, the Simons and Glasisch around a picnic at the Baldenau ruins, where Paul successfully sets up the radio receiver so that they can hear wireless music while Eduard takes a photograph of the occasion. These memorable images, keenly observed by the camera, are recalled in the ensuing episodes of *Heimat* by Glasisch. He refers to them through photographs, where they have been captured and immortalised, and with them the memory of the particular day they were "taken" and the events and people associated with them. Each time Glasisch selects another photograph, the viewer is encouraged to remember the subject of the photograph as it existed at the time it was observed in the previous episode. Hence the reason why Reitz's camera lingers over its subjects: as a filmmaker he is obsessed by the camera's technical ability to capture the moment as a moment which already belongs to the past:

Wenn wir uns an früher erlebte Bilder erinnern und Erinnerungen inszenieren, sind wir wie Magier: Wir beschwören die Toten und lassen sie vor der Kamera erscheinen. Die Filmaufnahme sorgt dann dafür, daß etwas Vergängliches, das in unserer Erinnerung nur umherschwimmt – assoziativ verknüpft mit tausend anderen Erinnerungen – wieder Gegenwart wird, abrufbar, aktualisiert, Bestandteil des gegenwärtigen Lebens.⁴⁴

⁴³ E. Reitz, "Die Kamera ist keine Uhr", p. 106.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

Photography is one of the main themes of *Heimat*. It is represented not only through the occasional character who takes a photograph, for example the young Anton taking and developing a photograph of the engineer Otto Wohlleben and Pieritz, or Hermann setting the self-timer to photograph himself with his first true love Klärchen, or even the film's devoted photographer Eduard. Many scenes are captured in photographs which were not taken by a photographer as part of the film's diegesis. Sometimes the characters pose for a few seconds looking directly at the camera, as if the viewer were taking the photograph. A few moments later, the characters continue in their track. Maria and Anton do this in part three, *Weihnacht wie noch nie* (The Best Christmas Ever) when they stand in the snow in front of Lucie's villa looking directly at the camera. A few seconds later, they turn away and walk towards the villa.⁴⁵ This image then appears as a photograph in the opening scene of part four, *Reichshöhenstraße* (The Highway). Often Glasisch-Karl's selection of photographs end with one which then merges into film footage, bringing that moment to life: for example at the beginning of part two the photograph of the three families at the Baldenau ruins merges into film footage.⁴⁶

The role of these photographs becomes increasingly significant as newer technologies and means of communication change the way of life in the Hunsrück. This is thematised by Maria's two sons Anton and Ernst. Anton builds a successful Optics factory which provides jobs for most of the inhabitants of the Hunsrück. He points out that it has taken three generations of labourers at his factory to develop fine mechanics' fingers from farmers' hands. While Anton is responsible for transforming the farmers into mechanics, Ernst is responsible for changing the rural look of Schabbach with modern accessories, persuading his sometimes reluctant customers to part with their old doors and windows, convincing them that "modernisation – that's the slogan of today. The windows need enlarging with aluminium frames."⁴⁷ This rapid change in lifestyle is not only thematised in the film, it is also expressed in Glasisch's voice-over narration at the beginning of part 9, *Little Hermann*, when he points out that "in 200 years things never changed so much

⁴⁵ Part 3, 24.59.

⁴⁶ Part 2, 2.10.

⁴⁷ Part 10, 22.27.

in Schabbach as they did in the ten years after the war.”⁴⁸ With the death of Maria and Glasisch-Karl in 1982, and with them a whole way of life, photographs remain as the only proof of their existence for the viewers who feel increasingly alienated during the final episode. The photographs therefore highlight the significant role of the camera in preserving the past, and the similar function of the film *Heimat*.

Photographs also serve as a substitute for the family. The undertaker in the cemetery points out to Hermann in part eleven that whole families used to live under one roof in the past, whereas nowadays they are spread all over the world. As a stranger appearing on the Simon doorstep, Klärchen, for example, has only her photo album as proof of her home, family and herself as a young girl.⁴⁹ Reitz claims that farmers do not need to rely on photographs because, as people who remain in one place, they are surrounded with objects which remind them of their past. Modern mobile consumers, however, have little other than a photograph or film as proof of the place and people they left behind:

Bauern-Geschichten liefern ihre Bilder als täglich sichtbare Realität mit. Dafür brauchen sie keine Abbildung, keinen Film. Vielleicht ist das die eigentliche innere Bedeutung von Heimat, daß sie keiner Bilder bedarf, um ihre Geschichten verständlich zu machen. Sie ist selbst das Bild für die Geschichten, die erzählt werden. ... Wir mobilen Bewohner unbestimmter Orte brauchen für unsere Geschichten neue, transportable Beweisstücke. Und das sind zum Beispiel die Filmbilder – oder andere Bilder –, die wir mitnehmen können. Das ist auf besondere Weise der Film.⁵⁰

Reitz, whose characters frequently lament the passing of time, has always been occupied with methods of capturing the fleeting nature of time. He does this in *Geschwindigkeit*, where he freezes shots taken of landscape and architecture in fast speed. The result is a streaky image similar to the photographs of the avant-garde painter and photographer Gerhard Richter. He achieves this in *Heimat* by merging photography and film.

⁴⁸ Part 9, 00.23.

⁴⁹ Part 8, 41.16.

⁵⁰ E. Reitz, “Das Unsichtbare und der Film”, p.130.

2.2. Approaches to History

Anton Kaes summarises the American response to *Heimat* by referring to three New York papers, the *New York Times*, the *New York Review of Books*, and the *Village Voice*, which criticise the film for its “dangerous whitewash of recent German history.”⁵¹ In response to Timothy Garton Ash’s question in the *New York Review of Books*, “But what about the other side? What about Auschwitz?”⁵² Kaes suggests that “it may be the ultimate consequence of the film’s origin as an answer to *Holocaust* that the annihilation of the Jews is almost completely excluded from the plot.”⁵³ He refers to Gertrud Koch, who interprets the absence of the trauma of Auschwitz as necessary for Reitz “in order to tell the myth of ‘Heimat’.”⁵⁴ While Kaes accepts Koch’s criticism, he points out that it overlooks a central dilemma: “Can Auschwitz be represented at all in a narrative form? Can a crime like the industrialized murder of millions be contained in a story without trivializing it? Can the monstrousness of Auschwitz ever be captured by aesthetic means without imposing some sort of meaning and logic?”⁵⁵ Kaes suggests that it can, giving examples of Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah* and Eberhard Fechner’s *Der Prozess* (The Trial). Comparing *Heimat* with these films, Kaes questions the motive behind Reitz’s nearly total exclusion of the Holocaust: is it fear, repression, or revisionism? He believes that it is conspicuous in view of the lengthy treatment given to the Nazi period in the film:

Five of the eleven episodes (episodes 3-7) take place during the Third Reich, and the second episode includes the year 1933. Three segments deal with the years before the war (1935, 1938, 1938-39), while two concentrate on the war at home and on the front (“The Home Front,” 1943, and “Soldiers’ Love,” 1944). Almost half of the film, a chronicle spanning sixty-three years of German history from 1919 to 1982, takes place during the twelve years of Hitler’s regime; thus more narrative time is granted in *Heimat* to the exploration and visualization of the causes, progress, and consequences of German fascism than in most full-length feature films or documentaries on National Socialism.⁵⁶

The images and stories which Reitz finds and tells about the Germans under fascism present, according to a disappointed Kaes, “stories of ordinary lives, using everyday

⁵¹ A. Kaes, “Germany as Memory”, pp.183-184.

⁵² Timothy Garton Ash, “The Life of Death”, *The New York Review of Books*, 19.12.1985.

⁵³ A. Kaes, “Germany as Memory”, p.185.

⁵⁴ Heike Hurst, “Edgar Reitz: Comment être encore un Allemand?”, *Nuit Blanche*, no. 21, 1985, p.70. Translated by Gertrud Koch, “How Much Naiveté Can We Afford?”, p.13.

⁵⁵ A. Kaes, “Germany as Memory”, p.186.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.187.

images, which always seem to assume the spectator's retrospective awareness of this history and its consequences."⁵⁷

However, the absence of the Holocaust in the portrayal of the persecution of the Jews and their extermination in concentration camps, does not necessarily mean that the film presents an idyllic picture of Germany during the National Socialist dictatorship. Rather, it reveals the prejudiced mentality of the villagers, whose hostility towards outsiders is one of the film's main points of focus, even before Hitler's rise to power.

Racism is already portrayed in part one with the jealous and ignorant accusations of the villagers against the rumoured gypsy, Apollonia. After three years of torment, Apollonia finally decides to leave the village in 1922, after the villagers have the midden inspected in search of her baby, which she is rumoured to have murdered, and after Anton Jakob the innkeeper stops paying her for her work.

A year later, Robert Kröber watches a gang of youths throw stones through the window of his Jewish neighbour, Kahn, as Eduard Simon, who accompanies them, takes photographs. Robert invites Eduard's sister, Pauline, who is standing under the window and whose fingers are cut by the shards of glass falling on her, to enter his watchmaker's and jeweller's shop. Instead of showing sympathy for his neighbour, Robert justifies the act of vandalism by explaining quite nonchalantly to Pauline that the neighbour is a Jew and a Separatist, and that several similar incidences have occurred during the same week.⁵⁸ A decade later, the now married couple Robert and Pauline tell Katherina that they will be buying Kahn's flat, thereby extending their flat into a house. Robert explains, "we think he'll sell. Things aren't so rosy for the Jews now." Katherina then reads the young couple a letter from her son Eduard regarding his marriage to Lucie in Berlin and their plans to return to Schabbach. He writes, "isn't it wonderful that we live in times in which one's origin no longer matters and where everything's starting to get better."⁵⁹ This clearly contradicts Robert's comment on the situation of the Jews and is juxtapositioned here for effect. Eduard is doubtless thinking of Lucie's background as the owner of a brothel and his

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Part 1, 1.12.27.

⁵⁹ Part 2, 41.51.

own background as the son of a smithy and farmer when he suggests that “one’s origin no longer matters.” The comment shows no consideration for the plight of genuine minority groups and outcasts.

A year later, when Eduard and Lucie plan to build a 52-bedroomed villa, Eduard protests to Lucie that they should not take out a loan for the villa from a Jewish Bank, demonstrating that origins clearly do matter. She replies that the Jews are people too, highlighting a point which is never considered by the characters in *Heimat*. Ironically, this is expressed by someone whose motive is not to make a political stand, but rather to secure the loan, in order to realise her dream.⁶⁰ When the owner of the Jewish bank, Bielstein, is then arrested in 1938 for “foreign exchange fiddling”, Eduard and Lucie hear nothing from him or the Party regarding their loan. Eduard fears that the Party will find out about their debt. It is not the question of Bielstein dying that bothers him, rather that he may be guilty of it: “I don’t want to be guilty of his death.” Not surprisingly, the opportunist Lucie is again the first to excuse him by pointing out that it is the Führer’s order that debts should be cancelled. She explains to Martina, “Eduard Simon got into debt through building up the movement. And the law of 29th August for the cancellation of old debts has settled the matter officially, the *Führer* gave the order.”⁶¹

In 1943 after Martha’s proxy Wedding to Anton, Lucie invites the bride and all her guests to her villa. After listening to some music, Lucie announces to the guests in her naïve, self-centered manner, “the war has its good side. It brought you into my house. Isn’t that right, Edu?” At the same party, Wilfried talks to some officers about the final solution. Pauline, who is sitting in the background interrupts and asks him the meaning behind ‘up the chimney’. Wilfried curtly replies, “I mean the Jews. I can’t explain in detail with children here. My comrades suffer greatly over this matter, as one can imagine. A very, very unpleasant task.”⁶² The conversation is once again very revealing of the attitudes which prevail in *Heimat* regarding the plight of the Jews. Wilfried expresses sympathy for his comrades, who have to carry out the ‘unpleasant task’ of extermination. Reitz’s focus on these incidences subtly reveals

⁶⁰ Film 3, 13.08.

⁶¹ Film 4, 58.00.

how the characters discriminated against the Jews and outcasts by taking no notice or responsibility for their predicament.

Katherina's communist nephew, Fritz Schirmer, is arrested by an officer who has known him all his life. After re-assuring Fritz's wife that "nothing will happen to him", he ends with the apology, "Don't hold it against me, I have to do it."⁶³ Reitz's film is all the more effective because it avoids caricatures of good and evil as presented in the American melodrama *Holocaust*. Instead of portraying history in the form of facile, binary oppositions, Reitz reveals the elements which contradict such a simplistic view. The film begins at the end of the First World War with the villagers' dissatisfaction at their defeat and the "farcical" Versailles Treaty. In part one, they gather around the unveiling of a memorial of a defeated soldier. A speaker tells them:

We Germans who still have ideals should work to bring about better times. We should fight for justice, loyalty and morality in the name of our war dead. Because of the farcical Versailles Treaty which so deliberately humiliates our people, Germany will one day arouse the genius of its blood who will deliver us from this dungeon of humiliation, like a saviour. Already we sense his shining presence in the distance. Then peace will come. A peace necessary for the strong future of our state and which will influence world history. Our loved ones did not die in vain. Let us bow silently before them.⁶⁴

During this speech, a frail old man holding a mini-monument walks towards the memorial and sings along with the choir. A villager explains that he is the baker, Böhnke, who lost three sons during the war. The tone of *Heimat* from the very outset is therefore one of defeat, humiliation, human and material loss. This anger is directed at the outsiders in the village, a situation which is fuelled by the increasing difficulties caused by the poor economic situation at the time. The village is therefore far from idyllic. The two characters the film shows most sympathy with in part one, Paul and Appolonia, suffer from the ignorant and backward mentality of the villagers and consequently leave. Appolonia is the target of racism, while Paul feels trapped by his obligation to continue the family tradition of farming – a situation which is highlighted with the symbolic focus in part one on a fly trap at the beginning, and on a marten trap as the final image. The film therefore strives for objectivity in its critical and at the same time sympathetic presentation of the Germans.

⁶² Film 6, 50.39.

⁶³ Film 2, 1.14.24.

⁶⁴ Part 1, 33.52.

Ash argues that “when you show the 1930s as a golden age of prosperity and excitement in the German countryside, when you are shown the Germans as victims of the war, then you inevitably find yourself asking: But what about the other side?” Reitz shows the 1930s as a golden age of prosperity and excitement because that is what it was for the Germans. In contrast to the previous decade of suffering from defeat, humiliation and hardship, the film shows a radical transformation in the 1930s in the lifestyle of its protagonists. The characters can afford the symbols of prosperity – houses, cars, jewellery, fur coats and the like. The Germans were literally enjoying their ‘best Christmas ever’. In his essay, “Sympathische Nazis” (1973), Reitz examines the motivation behind fascism:

“Faschismus” ist Wunscherfüllung. Revolutionäre Träume von der “besseren Welt” sollen zu *Lebzeiten* unter allen Umständen Realität werden. Ungeduld, gepaart mit Vitalität, ist das Motiv. Was man sich vorstellt, in der Phantasie, sofort besitzen wollen, als eine kollektive Gier. Lebensgier auf Kosten aller Langsamen, aller Schwachen in der Gesellschaft. Das Wunschdenken ist so stark, maßlos und weiträumig, daß der kritische Bürger als Spaßverderber erscheint: Er kostet den Nazi, schon durch die Diskussion dessen, was getan werden soll, Zeit.

Der Faschist hält das Ganze für ein Problem des Handelns ... “Fortschritt um jeden Preis”. Deswegen wird der Faschist versuchen, sich an die Spitze der “modernsten Entwicklung” zu setzen. Technologie, die beste Armee, die modernste Ästhetik! Der Faschist will unbedingt zu *Lebzeiten* glücklich werden.⁶⁵

Heimat should be contextualised within the framework of these early considerations. The film provides a different type of historical reference, not one which is based on political attitudes, but one which characterises the film in its chronicling of six decades, namely technology. In line with Reitz’s portrayal of history “from below”, the Nationalist Socialist period is marked by the rapid modernisation and development in technology “at all costs”. Suddenly the villagers are able to travel faster and communicate quicker. In awe of these revolutionary developments, the suffering of the minority is far removed for the protagonists, and rarely manifests itself in their daily lives. When the suffering of others is encountered, it is spoken about in small circles and in vague terms. Katherina’s frequent reminder that they will have to pay for all this remains unheeded throughout the film. *Heimat* shows the brutality of fascism in that the protagonists readily place material wealth before

⁶⁵ Edgar Reitz, “Sympathische Nazis” (1973), in *Liebe zum Kino*, p.92.

humanity, a sinister attitude reflected in the perverse aesthetic taste of the time: the popularity of death-head jewellery.⁶⁶

In focusing on the development and progress of communication in *Heimat*, Reitz is not turning a blind eye to the horrors inflicted upon minority groups, in particular the Jews, during the Nationalist Socialist period. Rather, Reitz is following his continual interest in a theme which he introduced at the outset of his filmmaking career in *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit*. His interest in technology and forms of communication appear throughout his films, both thematically and in the films' unusual formats and structures. It is in keeping with his film style as an *auteur* that Reitz pursues this interest in observing six decades of German history through the changes in communication.

Marshall McLuhan's discussion in *Understanding Media The Extensions of Man* offers a helpful insight with the interpretation of the technical means of communication in *Heimat*. McLuhan points out that "the term 'communication' was extensively used in connection with roads and bridges, sea routes, rivers, and canals, before it became transformed into the concept of 'information movement' in the electric age."⁶⁷ *Heimat* focuses precisely on this concept of transportation as communication. The first two films portray a world where the common form of transport, and therefore communication, is via foot and horse. The pace of life is slower and the community is more closely knit. Part one begins with Paul Simon walking back from the First World War in 1919 and ends with him walking away from the village for America in 1928. While this form of transport was not unusual in 1919, it appears extraordinary 28 years later when his son Anton walks back from Turkey at the end of the Second World War in 1947. The boots Anton wears to walk back to Schabbach are placed on a pedestal in his company's courtyard, as a symbol and reminder that it was during his 5000 km walk that he conceived the idea for his now successful lens factory.

⁶⁶ Part 4, 5.59.

⁶⁷ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (London: Sphere Books Limited, 1967), p.31.

Many scenes revolve around the forge where Mathias repairs cart wheels or fixes horseshoes. On his arrival in Schabbach in 1919, Paul quickens his pace at the sound of his father's hammer in the forge. As Paul looks through the forge window, the image of his father hammering an iron ring for attaching a wheel to its cart is depicted in vivid colours, in contrast to the black-and-white scenes which precede it. Kaes interprets the function of this scene 'on the one hand as a means of slowing down the narrative flow and on the other hand as a means of deepening the emotional intensity of the son's return while intensifying the viewer's involvement and curiosity as to the further course of the story.'⁶⁸ However, if one is to apply McLuhan's concept of the "medium as the message", the significance of this scene lies in the wheel itself as the precursor to almost all forms of transportation and therefore communication. McLuhan explains that "the 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs." He argues that because it is the medium that shapes and controls the scale and form of human association and action, then the medium *is* the message;⁶⁹ a point often overlooked because before electric speed "the message, it seemed, was the 'content,' as people used to ask what a painting was *about*. Yet they never thought to ask what a melody was about, nor what a house or dress was about. In such matters, people retained some sense of the whole pattern, of form and function as a unity."⁷⁰ As the wheel led to the development of carts, railroad, bicycle, motorbike, automobile, roads, aeroplane (indirectly) and, in its most advanced and complex role, also the movie camera and movie projector, then it is indeed the wheel which is the message here.



⁶⁸ A. Kaes, "Germany as Memory", p.176.

⁶⁹ M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p.16.



It is significant that the fixing of the wheel to the cart is the first activity to attract Paul's attention and to reinvigorate the exhausted soldier on his return. The ensuing conversation in the Simon kitchen, where Paul is resting, revolves mainly around the topic of mobilisation. Pauline and Katherina inform Paul that Wiegand has purchased a motorbike with a sack of potatoes. The theme of transport is then interwoven in the family discussion as Eduard reads out passages from a newspaper regarding the deadline to shift horse and cow manure from the French and American occupation zones and a theft inside a tram. Mäthes-Pat recalls the beginning of mobilisation: "We were in the fields cutting the corn, and the bell tolled, and Willi the postman delivered the letters, and they put up a poster. We ran through the village. We thought there was a fire. Mobilisation had started."⁷¹ Eduard then remembers the aviator, Rudi Molz from Woppert, who shot down 14 aeroplanes. The scene which follows features an old man tightening odd nuts with a spanner on a railway track. The subtitles announce that it is now 1921. If the medium is not regarded as the message in *Heimat*, then the scenes and dialogues seem somewhat haphazard. However, considered as a chronicle of modes of communication, each scene serves its purpose in featuring developments in this field. Part two draws attention to

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.21.

⁷¹ Part 1, 5.11.

another aspect of communication: language. Paul is depicted at a barber's shop in New York, Ellis Island while a French traveller is portrayed in Schabbach on her journey from Paris to Berlin. Both have been successful in reaching far away places, yet their lack of language skills prevent them from communicating with locals or other immigrants.

The gentle pace of life in *Heimat* soon gives way to mobilisation on a large scale in 1933 when Wiegand is no longer the sole owner of a car. Suddenly there are three cars in the Simon driveway. Wiegand announces proudly, "Three months ago we wouldn't have thought it possible. A new era has begun. We can see it and we're doing it all with our own strength."⁷² Katherina remains a sole reminder of the old form of communication as she declines Lucie's offer of a lift to the railway station in Koblenz, preferring to walk as she has done for the last thirty years.⁷³ An extremely significant moment in the film is the conversation she wakes to on the train to Bochum. A young family are discussing the bright lights in the distance. The child tells its mother that it is electricity, while the father explains that this is the new era, pointing to the chemical works in the distance, which he says "will help us."⁷⁴

Schabbach experiences modernisation on a grand scale during the building of the highway in 1938. The village is populated by builders and engineers from all over Germany, a feature highlighted by the workers' contrasting dialects and their discussion of regional specialities. With the highway, Schabbach, like many other villages, loses its sense of being "the centre of the world": the new roads now lead from bunker to bunker, making it unnecessary for traffic to pass through the villages.

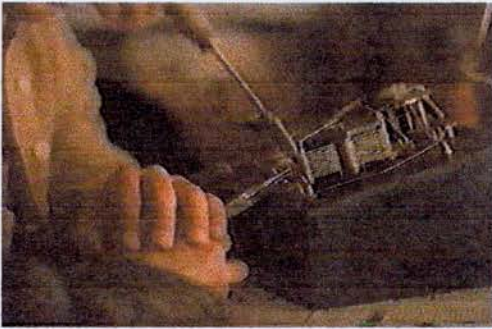
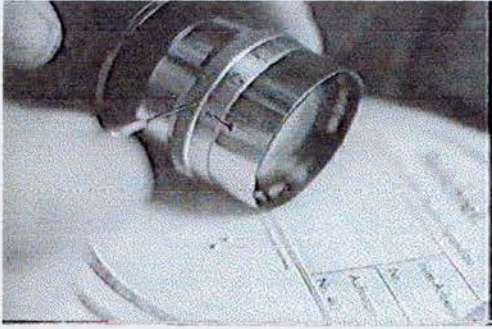
Many critics have interpreted Reitz's film as a nostalgic depiction of *Heimat* and its lamentful destruction. *Heimat* may show empathy for an older, more sociable way of life. At the same time, however, it reveals a fascination with modern, technological developments. Much film time is devoted to close-ups of technical processes. The camera lovingly observes the inside mechanism of the clocks Robert repairs. It zooms in on the fine detail of a lens Anton fixes at the Front, and takes its time in

⁷² Part 2, 53.53.

⁷³ Ibid., 1.1.16.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1.5.10.

depicting Otto defusing a bomb. The film portrays the effect of technical development on the way of life of a community. It weighs up the cost of this development, but does not necessarily oppose it. It ends on a positive note, allowing the viewer to believe that the characters are not actually dead, but united in life after death and able to observe their next of kin. It ends with the character most associated with Reitz, Hermann, combining the old with the new: the Hunsrück dialect forms the theme and content of his new music, which concludes the film.⁷⁵



Part two ends with a new dimension in communication: one that will no longer require physical transport for its function. Rows of telegraph poles are erected alongside the Schabbach road. The site of these poles forms not only the backdrop to many later scenes in *Heimat* but, in keeping with other forms of communication, it is

⁷⁵ Part 11, 1.34.17.

integrated into the film's story. Part two ends in 1933 with diphtheria killing some of the children of Schabbach. The camera focuses on the technicians fixing the telegraph poles as they inform Maria of the doctor's whereabouts and also each other of the number of child deaths. Part three opens with Eduard, now Mayor of Simmern, leaving his office and following the telegraph wire to Wiegand's house. As he enters Wiegand's front room, the phone is already ringing and Wiegand, standing by it, asks whether the call is from Berlin. The telegraph poles are later thematised in the film through Hans Betz, who takes to shooting the insulators at the top of the poles.

A more poignant moment in the film, however, is Hans' discovery of the concentration camp, which he stumbles across by following the telegraph poles out of Schabbach. The connection between the two highlights a connection between the development of technology and the murder which was carried out in the camps on an industrial scale. It serves as an example of the dangers of this new 'instant' and 'direct' form of communication: "the telephone, the teleprinter and the wireless made it possible for orders from the highest levels to be given direct to the lowest levels, where, on account of the absolute authority behind them, they were carried out uncritically."⁷⁶

The miracle of the telephone is highlighted in part six with the marriage by proxy of Martha in Schabbach to Anton in Russia. The Simon and Wiegand family and friends are gathered in Wiegand's front room, pressing against and listening to Martha as she speaks on the telephone to Anton, who himself must deal with the intrusion of a propaganda newsreel company filming him as he speaks. Wilfried summarises the event as a "minor miracle of our technology", acknowledging the war for this invention:

As so often happens, war is the mother of invention. Our indefatigable German diligence and inventiveness have made it possible for every soldier between Bordeaux and Karkov, between Norvik and Salonika, whether in the air or under waters, whether in trenches or stiff bunker, every fighting German soldier can be reached from home by telephone at any time. And thus we can unite our bride here with her bridegroom, our dear Anton, fighting far away. Who would think, crossing the fields from Schabbach, that the telephone wires are part of a network covering the whole of Europe.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p.263.

⁷⁷ Part 6, 34.24.

This is later echoed by Ernst, who tells Hermann, as he gives him a lift in his helicopter, that “war is the father of everything. That’s where we learned to overcome transport problems. Transport today is everything. I know what I’m talking about. After the war I started with a bicycle.”⁷⁸

This ‘instant’ and ‘direct’ form of communication is contrasted with the older form of postal service in a lengthy sequence which shows the sorting and transport of mail via train to Kirchberg and then via bicycle to Schabbach, where the postman delivers a letter sent by Paul Simon from America.⁷⁹ Similarly, postal communication between Hermann and Klärchen demonstrate a slower and, in this instance less private form of communication, involving physical contact between the postman and the recipient of the letter. The postman informs Maria that the letter is one of many that he has delivered to Hermann from Klärchen; a comment which proves detrimental to the young couple’s affair, after Maria opens the letter.

By 1967, Martha and Anton are able to communicate directly via telex with Simon Electronic Detroit in order to find out the whereabouts of Paul. Part eleven ends not only with telephones as a common feature of every household, but also with a phone box outside the Simon house: a feature which enables Ernst to secretly inform his workplace of the valuables inside his father’s forge.⁸⁰

The film’s web of communication media also includes the portrayal of radio, cinema and television. Genuine footage from all three media is integrated into the film, lending it authenticity, while also demonstrating the unique multi-media capability of film in reproducing footage from both aural and visual art forms; a realisation, according to Reitz, of the romantic concept of a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.⁸¹

On his return from the war, Paul spends 5 years building various radio sets: “We are making progress. We can listen to the whole world”, Eduard tells him in 1921, after Paul receives morse code signals from the transmitter at Hilversum in Holland through the aerial he has attached to a kite, flying above the Simon attic.⁸² It ends in

⁷⁸ Part 9.

⁷⁹ Part 5, 22.24.

⁸⁰ Part 10, 1.1.10.

⁸¹ Edgar Reitz, “Das Kino der Autoren lebt”, in *Liebe zum Kino*, p.118.

⁸² Part 1, 20.27.

1982 with Hermann's musical composition "Erzählungen" or "Gcheischnis" broadcast live on radio.⁸³ The medium radio, therefore, links both the beginning and end of *Heimat*, allowing the world to enter the small village, despite the development of more modern forms of technical communication media.

Radio is thematised in *Heimat*, initially through the character Paul and then through his step-son Hermann. Paul is reluctant to leave Schabbach with Apollonia in 1922 because he has started an exciting new project: assembling a radio set for Wiegand. Later in 1928, it is the sight of his first radio transmitter, now dusty and forgotten in the stable, which prompts him to leave his life of farming in Schabbach for America, where he establishes his own company, Simon Electric.

Radio is portrayed as both an informative and entertaining medium for the masses. The three families, the Simons, Wiegands and Glasisch gather together at a picnic at the Baldenau ruins to listen to the wireless which Paul has assembled together. They receive High Mass from Cologne Cathedral, prompting Wiegand to remark, "we needn't have bothered going to church"⁸⁴ – in fact he later skips Christmas Mass to listen to the radio at home.⁸⁵ It is at the picnic gathering at the Baldenau ruins that the families hear Leo Slezak's first radio announcement expressing his excitement at the prospect of being heard simultaneously all over the world.

The effectiveness of simultaneous broadcasting is then demonstrated in Hitler's speech in which he declares war on Poland on the 1st September 1939. The camera slowly pans along the air cadets lined up together with Ernst at the air cadet school, listening to Hitler's statement. The camera then cuts to the swastika flag above Wiegand's doorway, who, together with the villagers in Schabbach, is also listening to the same speech.⁸⁶ McLuhan claims that without this powerful and effective medium, Hitler may never have come to power:

⁸³ Part 11, 1.29.20.

⁸⁴ Part 1, 56.34.

⁸⁵ Part 3, 43.22.

⁸⁶ Part 5, 48.19.

That Hitler came into political existence at all is directly owing to radio and public-address systems. This is not to say that these media relayed his thoughts effectively to the German people. His thoughts were of very little consequence. Radio provided the first massive experience of electronic implosion, that reversal of the entire direction and meaning of literate Western civilization.⁸⁷

In 1967, part ten depicts Hermann recording nightingales. Using electronic equipment purpose-built for him by his step-father's sound company, he intends to "alter and multiply [the sound] to create a rhythmic pattern which nobody can identify." The broadcast of this piece by South West Radio in Baden-Baden again gives occasion to demonstrate radio's simultaneous access to the masses as the camera cuts from Hermann's live concert in Baden-Baden to the inn in Schabbach, to Anton's and then the Simon house, where the villagers, Anton and Maria listen to the same concert individually. Radio is portrayed as a medium with access to current affairs and live broadcasts, used politically and socially to inform and entertain.

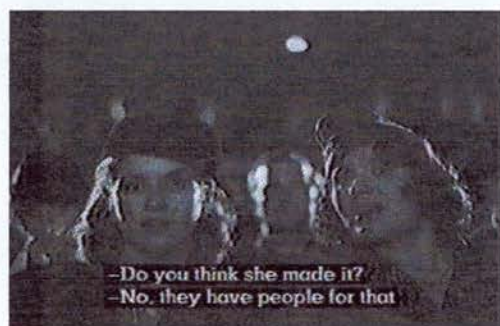
By contrast, the cinema is shown as a purely entertaining, escapist, visual medium bringing together a much larger collective at any one showing. While the scenes of live radio broadcasts portray a relatively small group of listeners absorbing information or enjoying music on the radio whilst generally continuing about their business, the scenes portraying the cinema introduce a medium of visual delight requiring and also receiving a much larger audience's undivided attention. Part four *The Highway* opens with genuine film footage of a scene from Douglas Sirk's *La Habanera*. The scene begins with a song of love and yearning which Zarah Leander, the homesick star of the film, sings throughout the film. While depicting the visual grandeur of the film, the camera also focuses on the film's reception, cutting to a multitude of strange faces all mesmerised and moved to tears by Leander's performance.

Reitz's interest in the architectural aspects of the cinema is extensively documented in his early theories. Here, he pursues this interest by focusing not only on genuine film footage and its reception, but also the interior design of the cinema. At the screening of *La Habanera*, viewers walk in late, carrying their own chairs!⁸⁸ Later in part five *Up and Away and Back* the sequence begins in sepia with the camera

⁸⁷ M. McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p.320.

⁸⁸ Part 4, 2.28.

focusing on rows of spectators sat facing a large stage covered with curtains. As the curtains go back, the sequence transforms back to black-and-white. The curtains unveil a screen on which the film's title *Heimat* appears in gothic script. The camera then focuses extensively on the reaction of the three couples Maria and Otto, Pauline and Robert and Martina and Herr Pollock, who are watching the film amongst a large cinema audience. The film they are watching again opens with the powerful voice of Zarah Leander singing yet another song about love and yearning.⁸⁹ These scenes from Carl Fröhlich's *Heimat* serve as a stark contrast to Reitz's film *Heimat*. In Fröhlich's *Heimat* the characters often break into songs of love and yearning, lending the film its emotional tone, which is further emphasised by the melodramatic and classical non-diegetic music. Reitz's *Heimat*, however, consists of a much more light-hearted non-diegetic music which is often alternated with a more sinister, almost threatening, tune. Also, while Fröhlich's central female character rejoices in being back home, Reitz's central character, Maria, often dreams of starting again and travelling to far-away places – a wish which she expresses after watching *La Habanera*.⁹⁰



⁸⁹ Part 5, 6.49.

⁹⁰ Part 4, 5.59.

The portrayal of television in *Heimat* reflects Reitz's own criticism of the medium. Here, television is depicted as a medium with little to offer except to prevent boredom, according to Anton, to induce sleep, according to Hermann, and for people who want to die, according to Maria. The first reference to the medium marks the introduction of colour television in 1967. This is shown on Anton's television set, which is watched half-heartedly by Anton and Martha as they sit and consider more serious business matters. Their small television screen shows genuine footage in black-and-white of a member of parliament "firing the starting pistol", by pushing down a button and causing the image to change from black-and-white to colour.⁹¹ The change is never discussed amongst the characters watching, nor are any television programmes ever given the same amount of attention as radio and cinema programmes in *Heimat*.

Little changes in the reception of television in 1982. Hermann switches on the small portable television by Paul's bedside table, to help him fall asleep. Neither character ever pauses to look at or listen to the programme offered.⁹² In the same year, Anton discovers a television set still in its box in the back of the Simon family stable. He remembers the day he presented it to Maria as "Die Perfektion im Kasten", telling her, "the most modern television there is, so that you don't get bored." Her reaction, however, is one of rejection, remarking that "that's for people who want to die. Now take it off the table." Tears well in Anton's eyes as he remembers his mother telling him: "When I go through the village in the evening, I see the television flickering through the old people's windows and I always think they'll all die one day in front of the box. All alone, with nobody with them. Don't do that to me. It scares me. Take it back and come and see me more often."⁹³

Reitz's portrayal of television in *Heimat* reflects his persistent rejection of the medium from the outset of his career. In his essays "Liebe zum Kino" (1962) and "Kinder drehen Filme" (1968) he dismisses the medium as inferior to cinema, and suggests that it should stop trying to replace cinema or to offer films in a trivialised

⁹¹ Part 10, 18.13.

⁹² Part 11, 30.31.

⁹³ Ibid., 44.31.

form, “Wir können im Fernsehen nicht lernen, wie der Film auszusehen hat.”⁹⁴ Six years later, he concludes from his experience working with school girls, that the pupils who did not have access to television at home had the highest marks at school, “Das kulturelle Leistungs- und Bewährungsklima ist in solchen Familien vermutlich am stärksten.”⁹⁵

Television, with its small screen, cannot offer the same visual and collective experience as the cinema. Nevertheless, it has been responsible for *Heimat*’s worldwide success and must therefore be taken seriously as a powerful venue, even for art films. Reitz has dismissed television for the quality of its programming, however, he has overlooked the medium’s *presentational* possibilities, not to mention its flexibility when used in conjunction with video. The success of *Heimat* on television has meant that Reitz’s search for a suitable venue for new film must take television and video into consideration. Reitz remains resolute in this matter insisting, even after *Die Zweite Heimat*, that: “Television is not an art medium – a distribution form at best, but not the optimal one. Of course a film on the big screen with good sound quality and the room full of people, is the real product. The tradition of cinema is my roots, that is where I come from and where I work. Therefore all my films are first screened in the cinema.”⁹⁶

⁹⁴ E. Reitz, “Liebe zum Kino”, p.7.

⁹⁵ Edgar Reitz, “Kinder drehen Filme” (1968), in *Liebe zum Kino*, p.82.

⁹⁶ O. A. Øvrebø, “Home is not a place”, 16.02.01.

2.3. Challenging Cinema and Television

Heimat has caused much controversy regarding its medium of presentation. Reitz made it for the cinema using his film production company while funding it with television money. Despite much debate on whether it belongs to the cinema or television, it has been a unique event in both media, conforming to neither. In the cinema, its unique attraction is its epic length, which has been accommodated in a variety of ways by various venues. In Munich's "Arri" cinema it was presented over two days. The audience spent 20 hours together during which the refreshments and discussions with the director and crew of *Heimat* during the intervals constituted part of the film experience. Wilhelm Roth reported in *epd/ Kirche und Rundfunk* that the event opened new opportunities for cinema, challenging television and more modern media: "Im konkurrenzkampf mit dem Fernsehen und den Neuen Medien bieten sich hier dem Kino ganz neue Chancen."⁹⁷

In London's "Lumière" cinema the film ran over four weeks during which it was divided into two 8-hour parts at the weekend and four 4-hour segments during the week. The New York Museum of Modern Art presented the film in four 4-hour parts and two 8-hour parts over 2 weekends.⁹⁸ Altogether the film was screened during 13 festivals in Hong Kong, Venice, Los Angeles, New York, Sidney, Melbourne, Canada, the U.K. and all the Scandinavian countries. The event has set a precedent in the possibilities of film presentation in the cinema, demonstrating that the continuous film – the film novel – can and does work.

Reitz is not the first to work with long film series. As early as the 1910s, following the popularity of story serialisation in newspaper journals and magazines, and due to the short length of film reels, film serialisation quickly became popular throughout the world. In Britain, the leading serials were *The Adventures of Lieutenant Rose* (1909), *The Adventures of Lieutenant Daring* (1911) and *The Exploits of Three-Fingered Kate* (1912). In America Edison's *What Happened to Mary* was released in twelve monthly "chapters" beginning in July 1912. In Germany it was the Detective

⁹⁷ Wilhelm Roth, "Ein amphibisches Ereignis. Edgar Reitz' elfteilige TV-Serie 'Heimat' hatte Kino-Premiere", *epd/ Kirche und Rundfunk*, no. 53, 7.7.1984.

⁹⁸ Jordan Mejias, "Ärgernisse. 'Heimat' in New York", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.5.1985.

Webb series (1914) and in France Louis Feuillade's crime series *Fantômas* (1913-14), which comprised five feature-length instalments, and the ten-part film *Les Vampires* ("The Vampires", 1915-16), *Judex* (1917), and *La Nouvelle Mission de Judex* ("Judex's new mission", 1918).⁹⁹ In Germany Joe May and Fritz Lang developed feature-length film series in the eight part film *Die Herrin der Welt* (Mistress of the World, 1919-20) and *Das Indische Grabmal* (The Indian Tomb, two parts, 1921) by Joe May, *Die Spinnen* (The Spiders, two parts, 1919-20), *Dr Mabuse, der Spieler* (Dr Mabuse the Gambler, two parts, 1922) and *Die Nibelungen* (two parts, 1924) by Fritz Lang. However, the individual parts of these films were never intended to be shown continuously. *Mistress of the World* was shown over eight weeks, while parts one and two of *The Spiders* were shown with an interval of four months between them.

The eleven parts of *Heimat* and the thirteen parts of *Die Zweite Heimat* were intended to be shown consecutively as *one* film over a weekend. The episodes therefore do not rely on cliff-hangers to ensure continued viewing, and can be regarded as self-enclosed. Even the relationship between *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat* is unique in that one does not serve as a sequel to the other. Where *Heimat* ends in 1982, *Die Zweite Heimat* begins in 1960. The latter therefore focuses on a decade already covered in the former, but from a different perspective. This unique relationship between the two films is not always grasped by critics, who have sometimes referred to *Die Zweite Heimat* as a sequel to *Heimat*. In *Reclams elektronisches Filmlexikon*, for example, Horst Claus refers to *Die Zweite Heimat* as "die 13-teilige Fortsetzung von Reitz's *Heimat*".¹⁰⁰ Based on this premise, a recent article on the long-awaited shooting of the third *Heimat*-film in *epd film*, announced that *Heimat* ends in 1950.¹⁰¹ The third *Heimat*-film is to continue this unusual relationship: it is to begin in 1989, seven years after the end of the first film, and nineteen years after the end of the second. The relationship between the films can be compared to that between *Die Kinder*, *Mahlzeiten* and *Fußnoten* in that they are not

⁹⁹ Ben Singer, "Serials", in *Silent Cinema 1895-1929*, p.106 and p.110.

¹⁰⁰ Horst Claus, "Die Zweite Heimat – Chronik einer Jugend", in *Reclams elektronisches Filmlexikon*.

¹⁰¹ Anon., "Endlich: Heimat 3", *epd film*, September 2001, p.4.

sequels to one another, but “footnotes”: variations of themes arising from one another.

The fact that *Heimat* has not set a trend in presentation of films of epic length, apart from *Die Zweite Heimat*, brings to mind Kluge’s words of caution regarding the limitations in experimenting with film length: “Diese Methode hat Grenzen. Die Urinuhr, die Abendstunden, die Tatsache, daß ein Mensch am nächsten Morgen normalerweise zur Arbeit aufstehen muß, setzen objektive Grenzen, ganz gleich, wie interessant ein Thema sein mag.”¹⁰² Reitz was warned that the film “was too long and amorphous to work as a feature film” by the commissioning editor of the WDR, Joachim von Mengershausen. However, while aware that conventional cinema cannot cope with a film of such epic dimensions, Reitz could not forgo the opportunity of creating such a work:

Das Kino [ist] heutzutage nicht in der Lage, ein solches Werk zu verkraften, ich dagegen hätte nie darauf verzichten können, einen so umfangreichen Film zu machen. Ich bin ja der Meinung, daß ein lebendiges Kino für sowas alles auch Platz in sich hätte. Ich habe mir das schon mal so ausgedacht: Es gibt genügend Leute, die Spaß daran haben, sehr lange Filme zu sehen. Man könnte so etwas in einem Kino unter einem ganz anderen Gesichtspunkt vorführen. Normalerweise kann man nicht sagen, die Vorstellung beginnt um 8.30 Uhr und dauert 16 Stunden; es gibt keinen Menschen, der so etwas durchsteht. Aber es gibt ja in der Welt andere Veranstaltungen, die solange und sogar noch länger dauern, etwa ein Wochenendausflug.¹⁰³

Heimat is a product of Reitz’s continual quest for a new cinema – ‘a dynamic cinema which has the capacity to take on all new film forms’. The film has ironically also drawn attention to the possibilities of experimentation in television. David Robinson wrote in *The Times*: “*Heimat* demonstrates that far from being an inferior and restricting area of operation for the film maker, television can actually liberate him from the constriction of form honoured in the cinema. Like Bergman, Reitz demonstrates that given this larger canvas the film maker can develop different possibilities.”¹⁰⁴

In making *Heimat* Reitz refused to produce uniform 60-minute episodes to satisfy television’s programme slots, a condition of working for television which, according

¹⁰² A. Kluge, “Ein Hauptansatz des Ulmer Instituts”, p.6.

¹⁰³ Frauke Liesenborgs, “... die Nähe zu den Menschen nicht einzubüßen. Ein Interview mit Edgar Reitz zu seiner Fernsehserie ‘Made in Germany’”, *Medium*, Feb/March 1983, p.59.

¹⁰⁴ David Robinson, “home truths”, *The Times*, 4.2.1985.

to Martin Blaney, frustrated Fassbinder during the filming of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*.¹⁰⁵ Yet despite the varying lengths of the episodes – from 60 to 139 minutes – the film was adopted by television, a master of segmentation, with great success. The eleven parts were broadcast in various combinations by different broadcasters: once weekly over eleven weeks, twice weekly over 6 weeks and even once an evening over eleven consecutive nights.¹⁰⁶

The tremendous success in television has led many critics to refer to the film as a television serial or even a soap opera. *Heimat*'s quality, however, cannot be compared to these trivial and light-hearted programmes: "*Heimat* never looks like a television movie. It is beautifully photographed by Gernot Roll. Unlike TV films, it does not place the most important information at the center of the image, in tight close-up. *Heimat* looks big."¹⁰⁷ While *Heimat* looks at history from below, it nevertheless presents everyday life not melodramatically but rather philosophically and poetically. It does this by depicting events for their cultural merits, and not for their emotional effect. Many scenes focus on traditional life, picking berries in the forest, making Easter eggs or spinning yarn. Even more attention is given to mechanical and technical detail, showing the audience the inner mechanisms of a clock, radio or camera.

Similarly, the purpose of the dialogue in *Heimat* is not to develop a dramaturgy, but rather to reflect on the times and the characters' understanding of the world they live in. The film is successful in television, not because it is on a par with the quality of a soap opera or television serial, but because it focuses on the popular subject of family and daily life – its approach to this subject, however, remains unique in this medium.

Reitz regrets that *Heimat* was not predominantly encountered in the cinema, but admits that it is more important for him to reach a large audience: "Das ist für mich ein wichtiger Punkt, weil ich durch das Medium Fernsehen an eben diese Millionen

¹⁰⁵ M. Blaney, "Heimat by Edgar Reitz (1984)", in M. Blaney, *Symbiosis or Confrontation? The Relationship between the Film Industry and Television in the Federal Republic of Germany from 1950 to 1985* (Berlin: Edition Sigma, 1992), pp.372-373.

¹⁰⁶ Gina Thomas, "Ahnungsloser Applaus. Edgar Reitz' 'Heimat' im britischen Fernsehen", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 2.5.1986.

¹⁰⁷ V. Canby, "Heimat, a Chronicle of Germany", p.9.

herankomme. Aber die Kinoversion von *Heimat* hat natürlich einen ganz großen Vorteil: Die Atmosphäre ist unvergleichbar.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ Thomas Wessel, “Heimat – die große Sehnsucht. Eine Fernseh-Serie, die den deutschen unter die Haut geht”, *Hessische Niedersächsische Allgemeine*, no. 3, 21.10.1984.

Chapter 3:

Die Zweite Heimat: Chronik einer Jugend in dreizehn Filmen

1. *Die Zweite Heimat* and Avant-Garde Art

During a discussion on music and art at the beginning of *Die Zweite Heimat*, Herr Edel, a passenger on the train to Munich, expresses to Hermann that the avant-garde should be slowed down. He advises him that success can be achieved only by giving up one's ideologies, adding that he will understand this when he is 30.¹ Hermann, who cannot imagine this possible, tells Juan at the outset of the film that waiting makes you stupid.² Yet by the age of 30, he finds himself waiting for Clarissa because he loves her. He rejects the offer of working freely with electronic music in Konsul Handschuh's sound studio, and returns instead to the Hunsrück, declaring that he wants to learn to wait.³ Some critics, like Töteberg, have understood this as Reitz's declaration that the avant-garde should be slowed down.⁴ Others, like Schütte, have even gone further, interpreting the film as Reitz's obituary for the New German Cinema:

Die Zweite Heimat [erzählt] in manchem die Geburt des Neuen deutschen Films aus dem Geiste der künstlerischen Bohème in München [...] – als Abschied von einer Illusion, die erst recht heute eine geworden ist, da der neue deutsche Film nur noch als Mythos in der Erinnerung seiner gealterten Zeitgenossen existiert. Reitz hat ihm da seinen Nachruf geschrieben.⁵

In referring to Schütte's quotation, von Moltke writes: "*Die Zweite Heimat* ends up staging the death of the New German Cinema far more literally than the metaphorical language of the above review would suggest." He interprets the fate of the three filmmakers in the film – the death of Reinhard, the temporary blindness of Rob and the betrayal of Stefan, who sells out one of his actors to Hollywood rather than finish the shooting of Reinhard's film script, as Reitz's portrayal of the end of the New German Cinema.⁶

¹ Part 1, 14.50.

² Ibid., 1.21.11.

³ Part 13, 1.46.41, 1.53.29.

⁴ M. Töteberg (ed.), *Edgar Reitz*, p.243.

⁵ Wolfram Schütte, "Reise zu den siebziger Jahren in drei Wochen", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 24.8.1994.

⁶ J. von Moltke, *Beyond Authenticity*, p.133.

Die Zweite Heimat certainly presents the history of the New German Cinema and, more specifically, the cinema of Edgar Reitz. However, the claim that it is a requiem for this cinema remains questionable. This chapter will study the presentation of and the role attributed to avant-garde art in the content and form of the film and will interpret this within the context of Reitz's early Ulm theories to investigate the extent to which *Die Zweite Heimat* in fact continues and endorses these.

The film's thirteen parts are devoted to Hermann and his young friends, who study, discuss and work with avant-garde art, philosophy and politics. The film's focus, however, remains firmly fixed on music, film and literature. In fact, it is the role assigned to these three art forms, both in the structure and content of *Die Zweite Heimat* which allow the film to demonstrate how the art forms can learn from one another, a concept which Kluge advocates in "The Early Days of the Ulm Institute for Film Design";⁷ how they can break with convention by taking advantage of technology, a concept Reitz suggests in "Definitionen"; and how they can be used as independent elements in film, in line with Kluge and Reitz's proposals in "Word and Film".

⁷ Alexander Kluge, "The Early Days of the Ulm Institute for Film Design" (1980), in E. Rentschler (ed.), *West German Filmmakers on Film*, p.112.

1.1. The Structure of *Die Zweite Heimat*

In an interview with Reitz, Chritiane Peitz returns to the general criticism that neither *Heimat* nor *Die Zweite Heimat* offer avant-gardist aesthetics. Reitz defends both films, referring to their unique forms of presentation, which conform neither to the cinema nor television. He explains that his decision to hold the premiere at the Munich Prinzregenten theatre was based on the fact that he could not envisage *Die Zweite Heimat*'s premiere either in television or in conventional cinema:⁸ a sentiment endorsed by the observations of the critic Karsten Visarius: "Die Filmtheater sind auf Werke, die so radikal die Routine durchbrechen, nicht mehr eingestellt, es fehlt allein schon an den geräumigen Foyers, in denen man in den Pausen essen und trinken kann."⁹

Yet, both media presented the works with great success, demonstrating that it is both possible and desirable to break from norms and to offer films as a spectacular event – a concept Reitz has championed since the outset of his career. Elisabeth Bauschmid described the unwaning number of audiences as the film entered its third and fourth day of screening in Munich:

Nein, kaum einer ist gegangen. Im Gegenteil, von Tag zu Tag wurde es voller im Theaterrund, wurden Ehefrauen, Männer, Freunde von ihren begeisterten Ehemännern, Frauen, Freunden alarmiert. Denn es ist gut, diesen Film mit anderen zu sehen. Und als dann alles vorbei ist, fällt es schwer, sich zu trennen. Man könnte einfach weitermachen, *Heimat* auf einer Endlosschleife immer weiterspielen.¹⁰

This trend occurred at *Die Zweite Heimat*'s screenings around the world. In Venice, Viktoria von Schirach reported:

Doch der große Kinosaal ist sowieso zu jeder Vorstellung voll besetzt, jeden Abend herrscht aufgeregtes Gedränge wie bei einer Premiere. Viele der Besucher haben ein Abonnement für alle Folgen gekauft, einige Gruppen aus anderen Städten kommen jede Woche extra angereist. Ziel dieser Pilgerfahrten: Edgar Reitz' *Die Zweite Heimat*. ... Von Woche zu Woche wächst die Zahl der Zuschauer (im Moment läuft die sechste Folge, die ersten vier wurden von knapp 13,000 Zuschauern gesehen).¹¹

The most spectacular screening, however, was at Nanni Moretti's *Sacher-Kino* in Rome, where instead of presenting the film continuously over three to four days, the

⁸ C. Peitz, "Das Kino meiner Träume", p.68.

⁹ Karsten Visarius "Edgar Reitz: Die Unvollendeten *Die Zweite Heimat*", *epd Film*, H.1, 1993, p.16.

¹⁰ Elisabeth Bauschmid, "Süchtig nach der Endlosschleife", *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 40, 18.2.93, p.16.

¹¹ Viktoria von Schirach, "Heimat due. Edgar Reitz reüssiert in Rom", *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 2.4.93.

episodes were shown weekly, making the audience wait thirteen weeks before they could watch the final episode. This most unusual form of presentation is the closest cinema has come to the form of presentation adopted by television. The event took advantage of the best of both media, using the spectacular collective atmosphere of the cinema, while applying television's aesthetics of segmentation, to allow the audience to watch the film in convenient two-hour portions. The result was that the audience would meet with friends on a weekly basis to enjoy each episode – an event which gave Reitz the courage to envisage that a new cinema could be possible:

In Nanni Morettis Sacher-Kino in Rom lief jede Folge eine Woche lang. Die Leute kamen dreizehn Wochen lang, also über ein Vierteljahr, meistens am gleichen Wochentag zur gleichen Uhrzeit und mit den gleichen Nachbarn, um die Fortsetzung zu sehen. So lief der Film über drei Jahre in ganz Italien, vor fast einer Million Zuschauer, das macht immerhin fast 13 Millionen verkaufte Tickets. Und da fing ich an zu träumen, daß es ein neues Kino geben könnte.¹²

Die Zweite Heimat's presentation in the medium television was also significant, for it unearthed an important element in television's structure. The process of television viewing within a domestic environment may not offer the same collective social experience, for which Reitz praises the cinema, nevertheless, the possibility of talking about the programmes to friends and colleagues at work the next day, transforms the isolated viewing experience into a collective one. *Heimat* could take advantage of this "isolated, yet collective" experience because it was aired in Germany in 1984 when there were only two public channels to choose from. *Die Zweite Heimat* did not reach the same viewing figures as its predecessor, partly because it was aired at a time where there were over 20 television channels. Thus the likelihood of sharing the viewing experience with friends and colleagues the next day was dramatically decreased. This change in the structure of television meant that even the large viewing figures for *Heimat*, which was watched by over 20 million viewers in 1984, fell to just under 40,000 in its broadcast in 1992.¹³

¹² C. Peitz, "Das Kino meiner Träume", pp.68-69.

¹³ Heinrich Klotz (ed.), *Edgar Reitz. Kino. Ein Gespräch mit Heinrich Klotz und Lothar Spree* (Stuttgart: Cantz Verlag, 1994), p.30.

Etwas, das im Fernsehen läuft, ist schon lange kein öffentliches Thema, kein Ereignis mehr, das die Nation vereint. Die Zeiten, zu denen am Montagmorgen auf allen Arbeitsplätzen über denselben Film gesprochen wurde, sind vorbei. Es kommen ja nicht einmal mehr zwei Leute zusammen, die im Fernsehen dasselbe gesehen haben. Dabei fiel die Entscheidung zur *Zweiten Heimat* ja schon fünf Jahre, bevor sich dieser Strukturwandel vollzogen hatte. *Die Zweite Heimat* kam exakt zu diesem Wendepunkt heraus, zu dem alle noch in den alten Denkgewohnheiten steckten, aber sich bereits mit den neuen Tatsachen konfrontiert sahen. Das hat mich selbst aus der Bahn geworfen, weil mein altes Bezugssystem nicht mehr funktionierte.¹⁴

There are of course other factors, which will have contributed to the decrease in viewing figures for *Die Zweite Heimat*. Reitz will have shocked his faithful *Heimat* viewers, who will have expected *Die Zweite Heimat* to return to the familiar setting, characters and themes of *Heimat*. Examples have already been given of critics who have mistakenly described *Die Zweite Heimat* as a sequel to *Heimat*, and who have rather embarrassingly assumed that, because *Die Zweite Heimat* begins in 1960, *Heimat* must end in 1950.¹⁵

Die Zweite Heimat's unique relationship with *Heimat*, not as a sequel, but rather a "footnote", has already been mentioned.¹⁶ With the addition of Reitz's third *Heimat*-film – to be completed in the first decade of the millenium, the three can eventually be regarded as a trilogy. Together they highlight Reitz's refusal to develop history or storytelling in a linear or "dramatic" line: none of them begin where the prequel ends. The films can be enjoyed as independent works of art, just as each episode within the films can be enjoyed as self-enclosed pieces. This structure has led to a dramaturgy which Michelangelo Antonioni, one of the main inspirations behind Reitz's films – especially *Die Zweite Heimat*, attributes to modern film dramaturgy: "Today stories are what they are, with neither a beginning nor an end necessarily, without key scenes, without a dramatic arc, without catharsis. They can be made up of tatters, of fragments, as unbalanced as the lives we lead."¹⁷

Die Zweite Heimat is a combination of very short stories, mini-dramas, and a simple account of situations,¹⁸ which occurred to Reitz during the production of *Heimat*. While discussing these sketches with his assistant director, Robert Busch, Reitz

¹⁴ C. Peitz, "Das Kino meiner Träume", p.69.

¹⁵ See Chapter 2, Section 2.3., p.106.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Pierre Billard, "An Interview with Michelangelo Antonioni", in *Blow-Up. A film by Michelangelo Antonioni* (London: Lorrimer Publishing, 1984), p.5.

realised that the central theme to all of them was a “second Heimat”: a counterpart to *Heimat* where the film focuses on the characters who break away from their roots in search of a new home, new friends and new forms of expression.

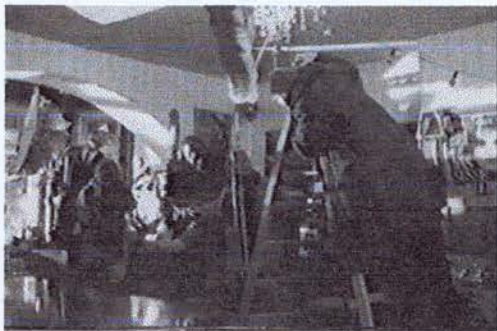
It is the film’s portrayal of its protagonists and the outcome of their art projects which has prompted many critics to interpret *Die Zweite Heimat* as Reitz’s requiem for the New German Cinema and a departure from the avant-garde. To support this, all the features criticised as “irritating” in *Heimat* seem to have been dropped in *Die Zweite Heimat*. The alternation between colour and monotone, which was applied randomly in *Heimat*, follows a general principle in *Die Zweite Heimat*: night and dream sequences are presented in colour, and daytime scenes are portrayed in black-and-white. The episodes which were so radically varied in *Heimat* – from 58 minutes to 2 hours 13 minutes – are divided into more or less equal two hour segments. Also, there are no ghosts in *Die Zweite Heimat*.

Despite this apparent softening of the radical features of *Heimat*, *Die Zweite Heimat* continues to testify to Reitz’s interest in developing a new film language. The colour alternations may follow a general rule, but as John Mephram points out, there are always exceptions and variations. He is one of very few critics to acknowledge and interpret the film’s colour format. He urges that they should not be taken for granted as the film’s basic format. The alternation between colour and monotone is used in *Die Zweite Heimat* to distinguish between the two worlds in which the artists live: black-and-white for the dull practicalities of daytime, and colour for dream sequences and night time when the students give life to their art, and explore their passions.

Of all the ways in which *Die Zweite Heimat* departs from the norms of realist drama, the most obvious, and most richly inventive, is the use of colour. The naturalistic film will always establish a norm, a taken-for-granted colour or black-and-white notation, that becomes accepted as the literal appearance of the fictional world. Because it becomes accepted it becomes insignificant, in the sense that the colour vocabulary is not seen as signifying anything other than literal information. What passes for poetic effect within such realist image-making is usually no more than a vague and cloying lyricism, a sentimentalised heightening of mood (think of those bluebells in *Howard’s End*).

¹⁸ M. Töteberg (ed.), *Edgar Reitz*, p.156.

In *Die Zweite Heimat* there is no privileged single notation. The film moves between black-and-white and a range of different colour vocabularies. The literal or naturalistic quality of the image is always in question, because there is no one style of image which we can accept as simply showing us what the fictional world is like. Therefore, we become used to looking for more than literal significance. Visual poetry becomes the norm, and light and colour become radiant with meaning.¹⁹



¹⁹ John Mepham, "Visionary storytelling: Edgar Reitz's *Die Zweite Heimat*", *Vertigo*, no. 3, Spring 1994, p.26.

The film's episodes may be more equally divided, but the film itself is ten hours longer than *Heimat*, while focusing on a shorter time span. The episodes are also more detailed and complex than those in *Heimat*. Each changes its perspective to that of one of its twelve main protagonists. This is carried out effectively with the added feature of multiple voice-overs, lending the film a literary quality in addition to its already demanding visual and auditory elements.

Also, the absence of ghosts does not mean that Reitz has tried to make his films any more "comprehensible" to his audience. On the contrary, he continues to agitate, this time by delving into the realms of an incomprehensible avant-garde art. For this reason the last episode of *Die Zweite Heimat* can be compared to that of *Heimat*. Seven minutes of film time are given to Clarissa's performance of a witch concert – an event which has been described as "atrocious kitsch":

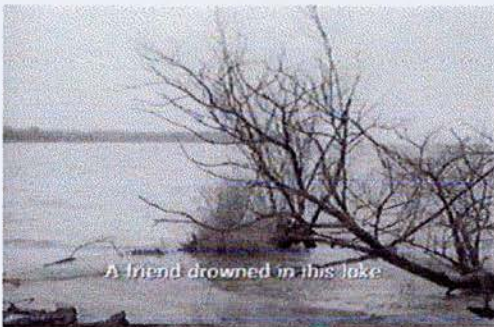
Es liegt aber nicht an den Film-Leuten allein, daß der Film gegen Ende in eine Schieflage gerät. So leidet die Schlußepisode unter einem 20 Minuten währenden Medley, das Reitz seiner Darstellerin Salome Kammer widmet und das in seinem grauenhaften Kitsch die Leistung der Schauspielerin wie der zuvor stundenlang dargebotenen Musik konterkariert.²⁰

These elements confirm Reitz's unrelenting preoccupation with avant-garde art and its boundaries. The film portrays this through its protagonists' experiments with their art forms. Reitz, it seems, is still in pursuit of breaking from convention and discovering modern art forms. This time, however, he seems to have discovered the perfect balance – a unique work of art and a success even in the popular medium of television. Within the film it is the task of the students to discover this perfect balance for themselves.

²⁰ Dietrich Leder, "Das Ende der Schlipse. Der Monumentalwerk *Die Zweite Heimat* von Edgar Reitz", *film-dienst*, 29.9.1992, p.39.

1.2. Word and Film

Die Zweite Heimat is a confirmation of Reitz's criticism, as set out in "Word and Film", of the view that film is supremely a visual medium. Both in the film's content and form, he reflects that images alone lack the expressive potential of words and can be misleading. This is demonstrated through the characters and the art forms through which they try to express themselves. The photographer, Esther Goldbaum, for example, travels from Venice to Germany in search of images associated with Reinhard after his death at the Ammersee, with her mother, who she believes died in Dachau, and her grandfather, the original owner of the Fuchsbau villa and the Cerphal Publishing House. She is unsuccessful on all accounts. At the Amersee she tells Rob that she had wanted to photograph Reinhard's place of death, but the lake looked just plain grey, harmless and Bavarian,²¹ supporting Reinhard's theory that everything that counts in life is invisible: "Reinhard hatte einmal gesagt, alles Wesentliche im Leben ist unsichtbar und entzieht sich der Optik einer Kamera: die Liebe, das, was die Leute denken oder fühlen, der Tod. Jetzt war sein Tod ein Beweis für seine Theorie geworden".²²



²¹ Part 11, 7.04.

²² Rob, Ibid., 2.05.

She encounters the same predicament in Dachau where she hopes to find an image which can suggest something of her mother's terrible fate. She gives up in frustration, exclaiming: "it's all so clean and tidy and it has been photographed a 1000 times":

Ihre Spuren haben sich verloren, so wie die Spuren von all den Menschen, die hier gequält und ohne Erbarmen zu Tode gefoltert worden sind. Man sieht nichts mehr davon, man hört nichts, alles ist so sauber und aufgeräumt. Da liegt ein Kranz, den so ein Heuchler von Politiker hingelegt hat, um sein Gewissen zu reinigen. Alles ist hier tausendfach fotografiert worden. Ich spüre es genau, wie sie sich hier hingestellt haben und ihre Bildchen geknipst haben, und dann hat sich da einer hingestellt, und dann hat sich der andere da auch hingestellt, wie die Hunde, die ihr Bein heben, weil der andere da auch schon das Bein gehoben hat. Und genauso ist das mit der Fotografie. Ich geb's auf.²³



At the Cerphal Publishing House where she seeks traces of her grandfather, she expresses to Fräulein Cerphal, in a fit of rage, that: "nothing fits. Everything I see here hides something, leads me astray. Germany is a book with pages torn out."²⁴ Finally, at the site where the Fuchsbau villa once stood, she tries in vain to photograph something which may remind her of the stories Reinhard recounted about the villa, but the block of modern flats now in its place make this a futile attempt. In a gesture of resignation, she pushes her camera into her father's hands and walks away.²⁵

²³ Ibid., 15.17.

²⁴ Ibid., 43.49.

²⁵ Ibid., 1.29.30.



Alex picks up on the ambiguous nature of images in his observation of a picture of J.F. Kennedy, which is pinned onto the wall at the Fuchsbau villa. It hides more than it shows according to the perceptive Alex: “Komisch, so ein Bild verbirgt mehr, als es zeigt. In Wahrheit hat Kennedy gerade einen akuten Schmerzanfall mit seiner Bandscheibe. Er lächelt gegen die höllischen Schmerzen an. Merkst du das?”²⁶ He makes similar observations on a picture of Kennedy with Chruschtschow, and of the set the filmmakers work on. In fact, throughout film six Alex is confronted with distorted reflections of reality when observing people or things through glass – understood to be synonymous with the camera lens.

The film follows Alex on the day of Kennedy’s death – a day for fundamental questions – according to Alex who, with his ‘heightened perception’ from an empty stomach, attempts to apply Wittgenstein’s philosophy of the world and reality to his own reality. In the Fuchsbau villa library, Alex reads that the world is everything that is the case: “Die Welt ist alles was der Fall ist. ... Die Tatsachen im logischen Raum sind die Welt ... Die Welt zerfällt in Tatsachen. ... Die Substanz ist das, was unabhängig von dem, was der Fall ist, besteht. ... Das Bild ist so mit der Wirklichkeit verknüpft, es reicht bis zu ihr.” Repeating the first sentence to himself,

²⁶ Ibid., 1.40.09.

he looks through the glass door of the library to the next room, where Renate is singing and Juan is playing the piano. Through the glass panel, their image multiplies, revealing a distorted reflection of reality and demonstrating that the world is, as Wittgenstein explains, the sum of facts and not things. In this case *things*, like the multiplied reflection of Juan and Renate, distort the *fact* that there is only one Renate and one Juan in the next room. Reitz draws attention to the unreliability of this image by portraying all three reflections of Renate's head in colour while the rest of her body, Juan and the room remain in black-and-white.²⁷



²⁷ Part 6, 25.09.



The two filmmakers Rob and Reinhard face a similar dilemma with images when they edit the footage to their documentary film on cotton-producing countries. In the editing room, the shots from their film footage remind them of the mood of their journey, inspiring them to tell countless stories which are not conveyed in the film footage. Finally, their editor Dagmar tells them to forget their stories, pointing out that while they have caught the subject well there is nothing of the mood and the thoughts which they keep quoting.²⁸ This is an important point, one which refers back to Reitz's criticism in "Word and Film" of the "formalism" of experimental film which relies purely on images; a criticism which could be directed at his own early experimental films. In this instance, Rob and Reinhard's film represents Reitz's documentary film *Yucatan* (1960). In his essay "Das Unsichtbare und der Film",

²⁸ Part 10, 36.37.

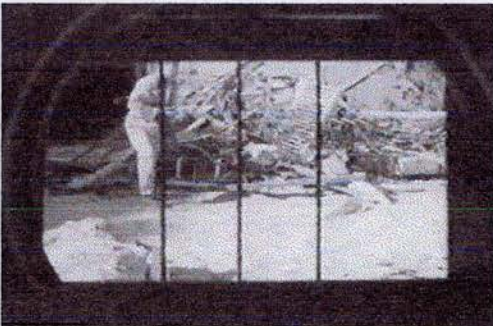
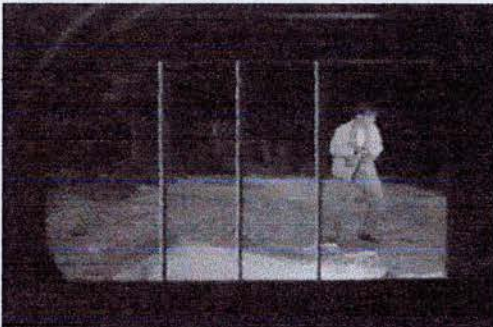
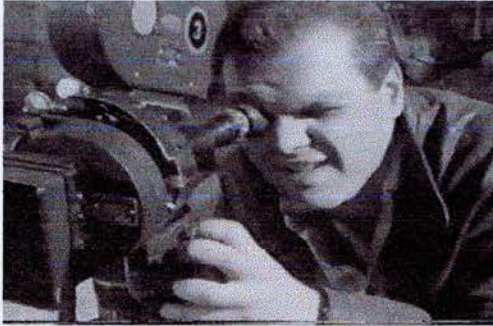
Reitz emphasises the significance of looking beyond the physical world and of presenting the invisible in film; a task which requires the application of word and montage:

Sichtbar sind immer nur die Schauplätze, die Personen der Handlung. Unsichtbar ist die Handlung selbst. Es gibt keine sichtbaren Geschichten. Sie existieren nur an den Nahtstellen zwischen den Bildern. Nicht nur im Film, auch im Leben. Der sogenannte Actionfilm täuscht sich über diesen Sachverhalt, kann ihn nicht ändern, trotz aller seiner Bemühungen. Wenn mit ungeheurem Aufwand Bewegung, Verfolgung, Schlägerei, Stunts, Schlachten, Brände, Zerstörung, Sex-Szenen inszeniert werden, so bleiben alle diese Bemühungen ohne Wirkung, wenn wir den Schmerz, die Angst, die Lust der Betroffenen nicht ahnen, d.h. nicht *erzählt* bekommen.²⁹

On his return from South America, Reinhard is shocked to discover a mass of land and a foundation hole in place of the Fuchsbau villa. Unable to come to terms with the disappearance of his past – the meeting point and place of artistic inspiration, discussion and creation of the students – his instinctive reaction is to call Rob and to ask him to bring over the film camera, because he wants to “understand” what has happened. When Rob arrives, Reinhard refers to the empty building site as the present and the large sign above the site, showing what will be made of the land, as the future. The two of them then look back towards the camera in the car, implying that the camera will complete the third time mode – the past. Reinhard tells Rob to look for images which remind them of the house. As Rob sets up the camera, Reinhard can barely control himself, running in different directions towards corners of the site which remind him of the lost time at the Fuchsbau villa. Rob, who is looking at everything through the camera, cannot share Reinhard’s enthusiasm. He asks whether Reinhard wants a long shot or a general pan, and what the take is supposed to tell the observer, listing what the camera sees: “a fallen tree, three oil tanks, a television antennae, a cellar wall, and now someone’s standing in front of the camera.” Provoked, Reinhard spells out what he sees: “speculation, devastation, the spirits of the past, startled and driven out. In the past people believed that sort of thing. Every place had its god that could revenge itself.” Ever the realist, Rob, who cannot see all this through the camera lens, asks whether Reinhard wants to put this in his voice-over commentary, drawing attention to the role of the word in capturing what the camera cannot see. Reinhard, however, insists on capturing it on camera. He

²⁹ E. Reitz, “Das Unsichtbare und der Film”, pp.127-128.

describes what he sees: “the house has gone, as if stolen, even its space has gone.” Again, concerned only with what the camera can show, Rob replies that the space cannot be seen in the shot. Finally, when Reinhard looks through the camera himself, he realises that the building site looks like nothing more than a building site. He asks angrily: “why does this bloody glass eye only goggle without hope or pity,” adding, “there’s nothing more stupid than a camera”.³⁰



Precisely for this reason, Reinhard chooses a career in writing, declaring that the camera cannot present what words can express. In part ten, he investigates and writes the history of the Fuchsbau villa and its true heir, Esther Goldbaum. This is a seminal point for Reitz, who claims in his discussion with Töteberg that the camera is

³⁰ Part 10, 1.59 – 8.44.

restricted by its lens. Literature, however, can express our inner feelings, because the human soul is educated with language and not pictures:

Die Kamera kann nur eine äußere Scheinwelt abbilden, die wir mit Licht und Inszenierung interpretieren. Aber es bleibt immer auf das reduziert, was durch das Objektiv geht. Was sich in den Herzen, in der Seele, im Bewußtsein der Menschen abspielt, bleibt der Kamera verborgen. Die literarische Sprache kann einen großen Teil dieses Innenlebens einfangen, weil sich die menschliche Seele mit der Sprache bildet; auch die gesamte kulturelle Dimension unserer Existenz hängt mit der Sprache zusammen. Unsere Teilhnahme an der Welt ist sprachlich vermittelt; vielleicht wird in späteren Generationen der Mensch in Bildern denken und empfinden.³¹

In part one, the three filmmakers Rob, Reinhard and Stefan are making a film, which borrows its title from Peter Schamoni and Alexander Kluge's short documentary film *Brutalität im Stein* (1960). Their filming of the "brown house", as the passer-by Herr Edel refers to it, is significant because it is a physical reminder of Germany's National Socialist past: a past which has been the main subject of all New German films. Again the image – the building itself – tells little of its history. It is words – Herr Edel's story – which bring to life the building's past. He remembers Hitler, Göring and Heß, travelling along the Arcisstraße while the people cried: "wir wollen unsern Führer sehn, wir wollen unsern Führer sehn! Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer!"³²

At the Fuchsbau villa, the filmmakers present a film on the bombing of the Munich Opera House in 1943 – a theme explored in Reitz and Bernhard Dorries' first documentary film, *Schicksal einer Oper* (1957). Stefan announces that they are celebrating "a kind of anti-premiere in an anti-cinema" because the film has been rejected by the Film Board: a predicament which was all too familiar for the New German directors. Although their film includes genuine footage from the Second World War, it is its voice-over commentary, which provides detailed information on the building's history and its bombing during the war. In addition to this, Reitz cuts between excerpts of the film presentation and a conversation in the adjoining room between Frau Ries and Evelyne regarding the death of Evelyne's mother during the war. As Frau Ries tells Evelyne of the hellish three day bombing inferno in July 1944, which killed over 6000 people including Evelyne's mother, the bombing in the

³¹ M. Töteberg (ed.), *Edgar Reitz*, pp. 163-164.

³² Part 1, 58.57.

student film begins. The buildings are seen tumbling to the ground while the film's non-diegetic music reaches a crescendo, bringing to life the scope of destruction and devastation of the war.³³ Stefan's film presentation is all the more effective for the viewers of *Die Zweite Heimat*, because they experience two voice-overs: the first belonging to Sephan's narrator, who imparts factual information on the Opera House's history, while the second, Frau Ries' account of the death of Evelyne's mother, lends the film a more personal history.

Like the filmmakers, Reitz is not content on relying on images; images which alternate between black-and-white and colour, and between dream and reality; images which are deceiving – the picture of Alex's father, for example, speaks to the camera. Reitz therefore introduces voice-over commentary for the narration of his film. However, instead of using a third-person narrator to provide factual detail, Reitz allows his protagonists to narrate. This way, they can express themselves in their own unique philosophical or poetic manner, lending an artistic and literary dimension to the film.

Die Zweite Heimat alternates between the voice-overs of nine of its twelve protagonists, to each of whom a part is devoted. Ansgar, Reinhard and Fräulein Cerphal are excluded, possibly because Ansgar and Reinhard die in the film and are thus left voice-less, while Fräulein Cerphal does not belong to the young generation of artists, whose perspective the film represents. Hermann, whose voice-over continues throughout all thirteen parts, speaks for them and other characters, acting as the film's main narrator.

By allowing the characters to narrate, Reitz succeeds not only in providing an account which is authentic, but also one which enters the realm of the invisible, allowing them to express their thoughts, feelings and wishes. Helga's poetic account of the Munich riots, for example, draws attention on the one hand to her background in literature and politics while on the other hand providing occasion for her to express her sexual frustrations and crush on Hermann. Her voice-over draws parallels between the atmosphere that day and her own feelings, while simultaneously interacting with the voice-over of Hermann:

³³ Part 3, 37.23.

Helga: "Es gibt Tage, an die erinnert man sich so genau, als hätte man eine Kamera bei sich gehabt und alles festgehalten: das milde Licht morgens um halb zehn, das Spiel des Windhauchs in den Kirchenfahnen, die Gebete der Frauen in der Prozession. Der Fronleichnamstag 1962 in München war ein Tag, den ich nicht vergesse. Man spürte schon morgens, dass es ein Gewitter geben würde. Es herrschte seit Tagen ein Sommerklima wie in Italien. Ich konnte es kaum noch aushalten vor Sehnsucht. Meine Haut schmerzte vor Verlangen nach ...

Ich versuchte, das in Gedichten und Sätzen auszudrücken. Innerlich schrieb ich alles auf. Ich beobachtete das Geschehen in der Stadt, dann mein Inneres. Ich empfand den Duft der Frömmigkeit und der Sünde, dieser Birkenzweige, die überall die Trottoirs einsäumten. Ich war selbst eine Birke und wartete auf den großen Sturm."

Hermann: "Ich war ungeduldig an diesem Tag, vom frühen Morgen an gereizt. ..."

Helga: "Ich war den ganzen Tag in der Stadt umhergelaufen, ich suchte dich. ... Als ich von dem Krawall auf der Leopoldstraße hörte, da dachte ich, endlich geht es los. Als hätte ich den ganzen Tag darauf gewartet."

Hermann: "Weißt du, wie das angefangen hat? Drei junge Leute hatten auf der Straße Musik gemacht und Rock'n'Roll-Lieder gesungen. Ein empörter Bürger aus dem Nachbarhaus hatte die Funkstreife gerufen. Als die Polizeibeamten da waren und die jungen Leute wegschleppen wollten, da empörten sich die Gäste des Straßencafés. Einer von ihnen hatte aus den Reifen des Polizeiautos die Luft abgelassen: Das wurde der Auslöser für die Straßenschlachten."

Helga: "Die Polizisten prügeln blindlings auf die Leute ein. Immer mehr Polizei kam angerückt und immer mehr Neugierige. Es war die halbe Stadt auf den Beinen an diesem schwülen Sommerabend. "

Hermann: "Ich höre noch dieses Geschrei und Gehepe, diese hysterischen Lautsprecherdurchsagen."

Helga: "Es war das erste Mal, daß wir so etwas zu spüren bekamen: diesen Haß der Staatsmacht auf alles, was jung war, was nicht an ihre spießige Ordnung glaubte."

Hermann: "Ich begriff überhaupt nicht, was das mit Musik zu tun haben sollte."

Helga: "Ich wollte nur nach Hause."

Hermann: "Ja, ich auch. Wo ich ging, sprach man mich auf meine Gitarre an. Und man versuchte, mich zu warnen. ... Ich hatte mich durch die Seitenstraßen verdrücken wollen, aber gerade das hatte mich verdächtig gemacht. Sie wollten nicht mich, sondern nur meine Gitarre. Allein meine Gitarre hatte diesen Haß auf sich gezogen."

Helga: "Da hat diese Stadt ihr Gesicht gezeigt! Die 'Stadt der deutschen Kunst'."

Hermann: "Auch so eine Erfindung der Nazis ..."³⁴

These voice-overs are also an example of why *Die Zweite Heimat* cannot be compared to a television series. It is not only their literal quality, but the very fact that they present characters occupied with the process of thinking:

³⁴ Part 5, 00.29 – 16.09.

Not only the form but also the content of this image identifies another of the ways in which *Die Zweite Heimat* is so unusual as TV drama. For its characters have the habit of thinking. This is for them an activity as natural and as necessary as breathing. They work at finding the right word, they search for conceptual clarity. Working with ideas is for them an existential matter. How unused we are to characters who take ideas seriously. These people are not content to live life from day to day or to keep their heads down, concentrating only on local and short-term questions. They want their lives to connect with longer term issues of art, history and politics. They want to think their way through to a sense of purpose.³⁵

The voice-overs are not mere individual expressions of the inner self, they are expressed within the context of the times, reflecting on historical events. This way the film provides immense detail on political and historical, as well as philosophical and artistic information. The voice-over narration in part six alternates between Hermann, Alex, Schnüsschen and Clarissa, who recall their personal whereabouts on Kennedy's death on 23rd November 1963. Alex, as the philosopher, provides the most thought-provoking account:

Ich habe die Gabe, uns historisch zu sehen. Ich weiß zum Beispiel genau, was ich am 23. November 1963 um halb zehn getan habe: Ich habe beschlossen, an diesem Tage meine Freunde auf die Probe zu stellen. Ich weiß noch genau, wie es in der Wohnung meiner Wirtin gerochen hat. Sie hatte die ersten Weihnachtsplätzchen gebacken, und dann war sie ausgegangen. Komisch – sonst ließ sie die Küchentür immer offen, aber an diesem Tage traute sie mir wohl nicht. Ich fragte mich, ob ich mit meinem ungefrühstückten Magen und mit meinem leeren Geldbeutel an diesem Tage überall solchen Schrecken verbreiten würde. Es war der Tag, an dem John F. Kennedy in Dallas ermordet wurde. Das Ereignis, das erst abends eintrat, hat unser Kurzzeitgedächtnis dieses Tages verlängert und in historische Dimensionen gehoben. Alles, was ich an diesem Tage tat, trat in Verbindung mit dem Präsidentenmord, der noch gar nicht geschehen war, den niemand ahnen konnte, ja, den man vormittags vielleicht noch hätte verhindern können, wenn ich es mir rech überlege... Es regnete den ganzen Tag. Genaugenommen regnete es in München den ganzen Tag, denn in Dallas schien ja die Sonne. Wäre ich Texaner, so wäre Kennedys Todestag für mich ein sonniger Tag. Aber so war es ein grauer Novembertag, wie er von den meisten deutschen Dichtern in Herbstgedichten beschrieben wird. 'Die Krähen schrein – und ziehen schwirren Flugs zur Stadt ...'. Nietzsche.³⁶

By means of the voice-overs the characters also describe their world of sensory perception. In part one, for example, Hermann describes the sounds he hears as he urinates in Renate's toilet: "Es rauschte und gluckerte aus den Toilettenabflüssen über mir. Hinter den Wänden und auch durch den Fußboden spürte ich die Nähe der fremden Menschen, der rotzenden, hustenden, schimpfenden, schnarchenden Existenzen. Das war also auch die Großstadt, von der ich geträumt hatte."³⁷

³⁵ John Mepham, "Visionary storytelling", p.25.

³⁶ Part 6, 2.44, 6.20.

³⁷ Part 1, 37.54.

Similarly, on her way to a doctor's house in Rosenheim, where she is to have a secret abortion, Clarissa describes the day purely through her sense of smell:

Ich habe von diesem Tag lauter Gerüche in Erinnerung. Der Rosenheimer Arzt wohnte in der Nähe eines Fichtenwaldes. In der nebligen Luft roch es nach Benzin und Harz und faulendem Laub. Vier Jungen versuchten, ein Fahrzeug anzuschieben. Die Auspuffgase vermischten sich mit dem Geruch der klatschnassen Pflastersteine vor dem Haus des Arztes. Beim Gartentor gab es eine Lampe, die nach verschmorten Elektroleitungen roch, und eine Mülltonne stand da, deren vergorener Inhalt säuerliche Luft ausströmte. Ich kam an der Autogarage des Arztes vorbei: Altölgeruch vermischte sich mit dem Efeu und den verwelkten Rosen neben der Hausmauer. Selbst das Eisengitter verströmte einen Geruch. Es roch nach Rost und Nässe.³⁸

This literary device has been criticised by the actor, producer and director Hark Bohm, who regards it as an irritating distraction. He believes that when Hermann arrives in Munich with the vow to learn and to devote himself to music, then the film should show how he overcomes various obstacles in fulfilling this aim. Instead, according to Bohm, the film gets carried away with literary contemplation, which he criticises for not “moving” him.³⁹ He applies the same criticism to dialogue, claiming that its literary nature failed to impress him. This criticism reflects a typical classical approach to film, where a dramatic line is followed by setting out an objective at the beginning of the film, which is then fulfilled by the end. The aim of the language in *Die Zweite Heimat*, however, is not to “move” the audience, but rather to deepen the many layers of expressive possibilities of the film, through image, music and word: both through voice-over commentary and dialogue – a device which aims to defy the classical approach to film as a purely visual medium, with its roots in photography.

Die Zweite Heimat owes its detailed and varied multi-voice narration to literature as a model for film. At a time when Reitz was experiencing his greatest disappointment with cinema and television, he asked in his 1968 essay “Der Film verläßt das Kino” whether a film 20 hours in length which could be watched in any portion and at any time, independent from either venue would ever exist. In considering this possibility, he compared film to literature, proposing that film deal with its subject in a manner similar to literature. He suggested that there should be no boundaries to films’ themes: “sie reichen von der politischen Information bis zur Philosophie, von wissenschaftlichen Detailproblemen bis zur Utopie, von der Beschreibung fremder

³⁸ Part 6, 1.10.06.

³⁹ Peter Sommer (director), *Musik und Sehnsucht. Die Zweite Heimat im Gespräch* (WDR, 1993).

Länder und Existenzen bis zur Sexualwissenschaft.” He claimed that the genre of the novel would be realised in film only when length was no longer an issue. Such a film, Reitz wrote, would be watched over and over again because the immense detail and the endless branching of its plot would not become boring, even on second viewing. Reitz concluded that when film departs from the cinema, it would leave it in every respect: “Er wird das Handlungsschema verlassen, er wird das 90- oder 100-Minuten-Schema verlassen, er wird das Schema des Starkults und des Ausstattungsfetischismus verlassen, er wird völlig andere Verhältnisse in Produktionsinvestition und Markt bringen.”⁴⁰ *Die Zweite Heimat* is a realisation of this utopia.

⁴⁰ E. Reitz, “Der Film verläßt das Kino”, pp. 44-47.

1.3. The Role of Music

Die Zweite Heimat neither criticises nor glorifies the New German Cinema. It can be regarded as an analytical film, which tries to come to terms with the artists' intentions in pursuing avant-garde art. In so doing, it presents moments of triumph and despair for the artists, who are portrayed sometimes sympathetically and at other times in a pretentious and arrogant light. The film therefore does not try to promote avant-garde art, rather it tries to make comprehensible the intentions behind what appears to be an incomprehensible art form. It can be regarded as Reitz's presentation of his and his colleagues' own considerations in their pursuit of avant-garde filmmaking in the 1960s. The parallels between the protagonists' intentions, their art forms and the form of *Die Zweite Heimat*, however, makes it difficult to categorise the latter as a departure from the film aesthetics of the New German Cinema, as it has generally been claimed.

That Reitz should choose a composer as the protagonist for his semi-autobiography emphasises his belief in the similarities between film and music. In "Definitionen" he refers to the similarities between the two art forms in their production process, reliability on technology and application of montage. Hermann's endeavours to break from musical convention, to take advantage of the technologies available to music, and to work together with other art forms, offer a parallel to Reitz's experiments with film. None of Reitz's other films allude to the relationship between music and film in such a variety of ways as *Die Zweite Heimat* both in content and form. The non-diegetic music in *Die Zweite Heimat* is as important as the film and is composed by Nikos Mamangakis, the man responsible for the film's diegetic music, and a colleague of Reitz's, whose own interests and experiments with electronic and avant-garde music in the 1960s share parallels with Reitz's in film. These parallels endorse Kluge and Reitz's early teachings that music and literature can serve as models for film. Indeed, this becomes one of the themes of the film, where the filmmaker Rob and the literature student Helga discover new forms of presentation in their art through Hermann's music.

In part eleven, Hermann contemplates a musical project based on the factual premise that modern man can process a thousand impressions at the same time. He casually

observes that “our life is a simultaneous, non-stop performance”, inspiring Rob to imagine “a continuous projection of film without a fixed beginning or an end. Just film, film, film!”⁴¹ Similarly, at a party at the Fuchsbau villa, Hermann asks Helga what she is writing in her notebook. She replies that she is making note of words which are repeated in various conversations in different contexts. Hermann joins her in her literary experiment and begins by throwing the word “cat” into the room. In a short space of time, the pair hear the same word repeated in completely different contexts in various conversations. Helga observes that the word jumps through the room, a concept that Hermann compares to music.⁴² When Hermann puts Helga’s “cat” poem to music, she positively glows with excitement, commenting that this is the best way of presenting poetry. Helga’s texts are later used as lyrics in Hermann’s music and as voice-over text and inter-titles in Rob’s “VariaVision” film project. The film’s focus, therefore, is not on one art form above the others, but rather on developments in avant-garde art, and how these can feed off of one another.

Avant-garde art serves as an expression of the revolutionary times in which the students live. They pursue it to shock their parents, teachers and the older generation in their rejection of conventions. The musicians do this in integrating daily objects and sounds in their musical compositions, much in the style of the radical and innovative American composer John Cage (1912-1992). In fact, almost all the avant-garde pieces played by the students in *Die Zweite Heimat* refer to Cage’s works. As “the inventor of new sounds and new instruments, and, along with that, the necessary invention of new forms and methods of composition,”⁴³ Cage’s interest in music bear many similarities with Reitz’s interest in film. Inspired by the avant-garde thinking of the 1920s and the futurists, both clearly demonstrate in their theories and works that technology holds the key to the future of their art forms. Mamangakis, who worked with avant-garde music in the 1960s, will have been aware of Cage’s groundbreaking work in this area, when composing the music scenes for *Die Zweite Heimat*.

⁴¹ Part 11, 49.45.

⁴² Part 3, 46.22.

⁴³ James Pritchett, *The music of John Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.11.

In part one, Hermann enters the university cafeteria, where he witnesses a lively and innovative ‘spoon concert’ improvised by some young musicians. They create a wild rhythm by striking every object they can find. They beat their dishes, cups and table with spoons and forks, they slap their cheeks, stamp, groan, bellow into the teapot, hammer the radiator with spoons, bang on the window and whistle.⁴⁴



⁴⁴ Part 1, 1.19.59.

A similar performance is enacted at a poem recital at the Fuchsbau villa by the literature students, who demonstrate that, like film and music, literature can also take advantage of the time structure and present itself using rhythmic structures:

Es wird "zweistimmig" gelesen, so daß eine Art absurder Dialog entsteht. Zur Darbietung gehört auch, daß in die Hände geklatscht wird, daß man rückwärts atmet, faucht und stampft. ... Das Unglaubliche an dem Lautgedicht ist, daß es nach einer sehr exakten Partitur vorgetragen wird. So entsteht ein absurdes Verhältnis zwischen der Unsinnigkeit der Texte und der Präzision der Form. Wieder wird geklatscht, gefaucht, gestampft und in sinnlosen Silbenfolgen gezischt, geraunt, gelockt.⁴⁵

Both performances are reminiscent of Cage's experiments with "new sounds". In 1942, he created a savage rhythm with his percussion group by playing beer bottles, flower pots, cowbells, automobile brake drums, dinner bells, thundersheets and, in his own words, anything they could lay their hands on in an attempt to make the entire field of audible sound available to music.⁴⁶

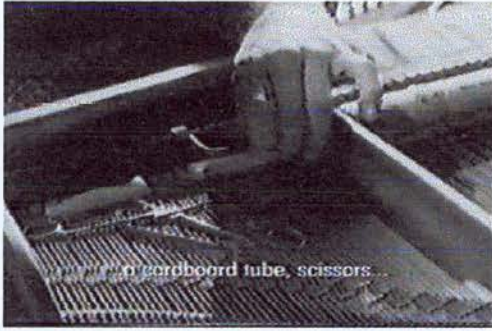
Volker uses non-musical objects not only as instruments within their own right in his composition pieces, but also as accessories to his piano, in an attempt to change its sound altogether. In part one, Hermann finds Volker "preparing" his piano by fastening safety pins, an eraser, sponges, a key, a cardboard tube and scissors to the inside of the instrument⁴⁷ – Hermann does this later to his guitar. Again, this "prepared" piano is Cage's best known innovation, with all sorts of objects – nails, screws, rubber bands, paper clips, clothes pegs – inserted at carefully studied points and distances between the strings.



⁴⁵ E. Reitz, *Die Zweite Heimat*, p.133. Part 2, 54.15.

⁴⁶ Richard Kostelantz (ed.), *John Cage. An Anthology* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), pp.61-62.

⁴⁷ Part 1, 1.31.27.



Cage recollected that his inspiration for creating new sounds was derived from the avant-garde filmmaker, Oskar Fischinger, who on meeting him in 1935-36 told him: "Everything in the world has a spirit, and this spirit becomes audible by its being set into vibration." From then on Cage's main concern was the invention of new sounds and new instruments. He recalled that it was this meeting with Fischinger which "started me on a path of exploration of the world around me which has never stopped – of hitting and scratching and scraping and rubbing everything, with anything I can get my hands on." Cage preferred to redefine the term music as "organisation of sound" and saw the future of music in the close collaboration of musicians and sound engineers.⁴⁸

This recalls Reitz's point concerning the similarities between the two art forms, music and film. On the one hand, the composer Cage draws his musical inspiration from the avant-garde filmmaker, Fischinger. On the other hand, the filmmaker Reitz refers not only to Cage's works in *Die Zweite Heimat*, his filmic concepts also show an affinity with Cage's music.

Similarly, Reitz breaks from convention with *Die Zweite Heimat*, refusing to adhere to one colour format, one genre, or a linear dramaturgy. The film's immense length and structure reflect a non-cinematic form, one which can be compared to literature and, in spite of Reitz's denials, television. To this extent the film is as avant-garde in the world of cinema, as the musical compositions it presents.

Reitz's portrayal of the works of art created by Hermann and his friends demonstrates his understanding of avant-garde art, one which in turn serves as a measuring stick with which the avant-garde nature of his own films can be assessed.

Inspired by André Breton and Walter Benjamin, Dietrich Scheunemann recently challenged Peter Bürger's long-standing, critically acclaimed definition of avant-garde art, claiming that "the avant-gardist storm in the arts world was caused by the challenge which the advances of new technical media, in particular photography and film, posed to traditional art forms and the traditional understanding of art."⁴⁹ This is a seminal point for *Die Zweite Heimat*, which focuses on the impact of technological innovation on artistic forms of expression. Reitz portrays parallels between developments in film, music and literature, indicating that these have occurred as a result of advances in technical media and not from a shared objective amongst artists. Scheunemann also makes this point in his interpretation of Breton's introduction to an exhibition of paintings by Max Ernst: "material pressures emanating from technological advances and not a common ideological orientation or unified intention of the various art movements provided the main impetus for the development of the new modes of expression."⁵⁰

Cage's concept of avant-garde music in his lecture, "The Future of Music: Credo" is based on the same principles of the collaboration of art and technology:

I believe that the use of noise to make music will continue and increase until we reach a music produced through the aid of electrical instruments which will make available for musical purposes any and all sounds that can be heard. Photoelectric, film, and mechanical mediums for the synthetic production of music will be explored. Whereas, in the past, the point of disagreement has been between dissonance and consonance, it will be, in the immediate future, between noise and so-called musical sounds.⁵¹

Hermann, Reitz's alter ego, is the first to explore this field in *Die Zweite Heimat*. In part four he builds a bizarre conglomeration of sound producers in preparation for a concert. With his musicians, he tries to draw out sound from organ pipes of various sizes. In order to do this, he uses the stream of air from old vacuum cleaners. He

⁴⁸ Richard Fleming and William Duckworth (eds.), *John Cage at Seventy-Five* (London and Toronto: Bucknell University Press, 1989), p.19.

⁴⁹ Dietrich Scheunemann, "On Photography and Painting. Prolegomena to a new theory of the avant-garde", in D. Scheunemann (ed.), *European Avant-Garde New Perspectives* (Amsterdam-Atlanta: Rodopi, 2000), p.16.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.15.

⁵¹ J. Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage*, p.10.

describes it in his voice-over narration as “a stage happening with bass, drums, electronic sounds, piano, a wind machine and eight vacuum cleaners.”⁵²

Hermann’s work in the field of electronic music eventually wins him a prize from Konsul Handschuh for his composition for Reinhard and Rob’s documentary film on cotton-producing countries. Konsul Handschuh offers him a studio for producing electronic sound: “liberated from the pressures of commercial composition. ... A completely unconventional acoustic processing of advertisements for radio and television.”⁵³

This is a realisation of Reitz’s vision of a future cinema, as set out in “Utopie Kino”:

Die Fragen der Montage, des Schnittes, der Vereinigung aller großen und kleinen Gestaltungselemente zum Film sind ein außerordentlich umfangreicher Komplex von Techniken, Methoden und Möglichkeiten geworden, deren Wirkungen im einzelnen nahezu unbekannt geblieben sind und die dringend geklärt werden müssen. Ein Film, der aus dem *Bewußtsein dieses Gesamtspektrums* der Gestaltungsmethoden entsteht, wird dem Kino eine Fülle von Material liefern, die die Leinwand bisher nicht gekannt hat. Es sind Inhalte denkbar, die alle diese Mittel brauchen, um real zu werden. Die Auswahl und Ökonomie der verfügbaren Mittel sind der Entscheidung des Gestalters überlassen, der mit einer bisher unbekannten Freiheit über ein Areal von Möglichkeiten verfügt. Er muß von den *technischen Normen* befreit werden. Sämtliche technischen Möglichkeiten, die geeignet sind, Inhalte zu transportieren, müssen verfügbar gemacht werden. ... *Der variable Film*, der Film mit austauschbaren Formen, ist bereits denkbar. Versuche für mehrkanalige Bildabläufe, für Simultan-Vorführungen und *Mischformen* von Radio, Television und Film sind bereits im Gange.⁵⁴

The multi-media possibilities of film are explored several times by the students in *Die Zweite Heimat*, in their attempts to bring together music, film and literature not as an “integrated work of art”, but as separate elements, as advocated in “Word and Film”. They do this in part two by projecting Rob, Reinhard and Stefan’s film onto a cinemascope screen, whilst in the foreground Dietrich Henschel sings Günter Eich’s poem “Wacht auf, denn eure Träume sind schlecht”, set to Volker’s musical score. The event is a true realisation of Brecht’s concept of the “separation of the elements”. Words, music and images refuse to accompany one another in harmony, theme or even source: the film is presented on screen, the orchestra plays off-stage, while the performer recites on stage. The black-and-white experimental film in the background, which presents fleeting glimpses of landscape and architecture, could

⁵² Part 4, 27.46 and 48.44.

⁵³ Part 12, 51.37.

⁵⁴ E. Reitz, “Utopie Kino”, p.19.

not be more contrastive in style and theme to the brightly dressed performer in the foreground on stage, dressed in a golden-coloured clown costume with inflated shoulder pads. This absurd comic figure again seems out of place in comparison to the very serious orchestra members off stage, dressed in black suits with white painted faces. The event truly demands a form of “complex” seeing to acknowledge the diverse art forms, itself adhering to the words preached by the performer: “Seid unbequem, seid Sand, nicht das Öl im Getriebe der Welt!”⁵⁵

Reitz explains to Töteberg that he has learnt filmmaking from the avant-garde and gives an example of new music, which rejects harmony: “Ich habe von der Avantgarde gelernt. Die Neue Musik zum Beispiel lehnt die Harmonie ab, sucht das Unerwartete oder das nicht berechenbare Nebeneinander von Eindrücken. Von solchen Prinzipien habe ich mich leiten lassen.” He points out that conventional dramaturgy, adopted in American and also European cinema, has taught the viewer that expectations have to be satisfied. Taking his lead from new music, Reitz avoids attempting to fulfil such expectations. He gives an example of his approach, referring to an incident in his film where a chance meeting between two characters and the ensuing conversation is interrupted and subsequently forgotten about. He points out that although the two characters meet again, they never refer back to their original conversation in order to bring it to a close.⁵⁶ His two *Heimat*-films therefore can be regarded as an odyssey which introduce a variety of characters, themes, art forms and events, without aiming to ‘tie loose ends’ or to bring the films to a definite end. The films can be compared to music in their structure, which shows no beginning or end.

Typical of Reitz is the film’s end which introduces a new beginning: a chapter in the lives of his characters comes to an end, but a new one begins, one that is not self-explanatory and therefore leaves its audience wondering how the film could continue. For this reason, Hermann’s return to the Hunsrück and his wish to learn to wait, should not be interpreted as the film’s message. Hermann has reached a point in his life when he needs to reconsider his future. The film’s ending shows a time of change in the characters’ lives, but does not indicate whether Hermann will cease to

⁵⁵ Part 2, 41.47.

⁵⁶ M. Töteberg (ed.), *Edgar Reitz*, p.243.

experiment with music. Reitz therefore compares the film's ending to a piece of music, stating that it should not be regarded as an answer to the questions which arise in the film, but rather as a pause similar to that used in music as a temporary solution.

Es mußte ein Ende gefunden werden, doch in Wahrheit ist es eine Scheinlösung. Wie man in der Musik eine Fermate macht: Sie löst das Problem nicht, sondern beruhigt für den Augenblick. Beim Erzählen gibt es keine echten Lösungen (auch das Happy-End ist immer eine Scheinlösung), doch sobald man eine Geschichte erzählt, gibt es das Bedürfnis, zu erfahren, wie sie ausgeht. Zumindest formal muß man ein Ende setzen, doch Hermanns Heimkehr ist nicht endgültig, der zitierte Satz keine Antwort auf die im Film aufgeworfenen Fragen.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp.157-158.

Conclusion

This dissertation is concerned with the extent to which *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat* reflect Reitz's experimental film style, which he developed as part of the New German Cinema's pursuit of a new film language. The chapters on Reitz's early theories and film projects, and his *Heimat*-films compare how *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat* have been influenced by Reitz's early avant-garde concepts. The experimentation with colour formats in *Kommunikation* and *Geschwindigkeit*, the departure from the 90-minute format in *VariaVision*, the exploration of word and image in the use of dialogue, voice-over commentary and inter-titles in *Mahlzeiten* as well as its combination of several genres, and the episodic form of *Geschichten vom Kübelkind* have all played a significant role in the creation of a unique film genre in *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat*.

However, the films also represent a shift in Reitz's film style. At the beginning of their careers, Reitz and the young German directors found it impossible to tell stories:

Noch in den 60er Jahren habe ich immer gesagt, Geschichten erzählen ist unmöglich, von der Liebe zu sprechen in einem Film ist unmöglich. Eine Handlung zu entwickeln, die sich über einen Zeitraum von mehr als zehn Minuten erstreckt, ist unmöglich. Alles, was große erzählerische Formen anstrebt, was eine Form von Kontinuität in der menschlichen Seele behauptet, ist undenkbar, weil die Kunstgeschichte und die Lebenserfahrung unseres Jahrhunderts uns immer nur bewiesen, daß dieses garnicht gehen, daß es immer nur auf Täuschungen beruhen kann.¹

The New German directors regarded storytelling as a manipulation of events into a cause-and-effect relationship with a beginning, middle and an end. They believed this development to be a misrepresentation of reality, as Wenders succinctly describes:

¹ Reitz in E. Netenjakob, "Reitz und das neue Genre. Versuch über *Die Zweite Heimat*", *Sonderdruck der FUNK-Korrespondenz* (Köln: Verlag Katholisches Institut für Medieninformation, 1993), p.26.

Im Grunde denke ich, daß die einzelnen Situationen nicht miteinander verbunden sind, und Erfahrungen bestehen in meinem Leben immer nur aus isolierten Situationen; nie ist mir eine Geschichte begegnet mit Anfang und Ende. Für einen, der Geschichten erzählt, ist das ja geradezu eine Sünde, aber ich muß gestehen, mein ganzes Leben lang habe ich keine einzige Geschichte erlebt. In Wirklichkeit, glaube ich, lügen Geschichten, besser gesagt: sie sind per definitionem Lügengeschichten.²

Ironically, *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat* constitute a watershed in Reitz's film oeuvre precisely because he has been taken seriously, for the very first time, as a storyteller. In fact, in almost all the reviews on *Heimat*, the discovery of Reitz as a storyteller has itself been a major story. With *Die Zweite Heimat* this role has become fully established: "Reitz hatte das Erzählen entdeckt, sich damit selber wiedergefunden und die Zeit, in der er seine Kindheit verbrachte. Er hatte alle Theorie beiseitegelegt und sich dem Erzählen überlassen, im Vertrauen darauf, daß die Geschichte sich von selbst fortzeugt."³

In his book *Edgar Reitz. Kino*, Heinrich Klotz addresses this contradiction, comparing Reitz's rejection of storytelling during the early years in Ulm with his current renown as a storyteller through *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat*:

Sie haben Ihre rationalisierende und analytische Haltung der Ulmer Zeit zurückgelassen. Zusammen mit Alexander Kluge haben Sie in Ulm etwas versucht, das sich aus heutiger Sicht ansieht wie ein heroisches Aufbäumen gegen die Tradition des Geschichtenerzählens. Es war ja sehr respektabel, wie Sie beide versucht haben, sich zu entfernen von der bloßen Erzählung. ... Dann aber, als Sie tatsächlich wieder eine große Fiktion hervorgebracht haben, eine Scheinwelt, *Heimat* und *Die Zweite Heimat*, sind Sie in aller Welt anerkannt worden, erst dann. Sie sind erst dann das geworden, was Sie heute sind, indem Sie erzählt haben, indem Sie auch keine Bedenken mehr davor hatten, Geschichten zu erzählen. Sie wurden wieder Geschichtenerzähler.⁴

Reitz readily admits to this, pointing out not only that it was wrong for the avant-garde to reject storytelling, but that it was a relief for him to discover it:

Was es schon immer gegeben hat, ist das Geschichtenerzählen oder das Musikmachen oder das Bildermalen. Es hat immer gegeben, daß man schauspielert, also szenische Darstellung macht, daß man tanzt usw. Es hat dies immer gegeben und es wird es immer weiter geben. Es war der Fehler der Avantgarde, das zu ignorieren.

² Wim Wenders, "Unmögliche Geschichten. Vortrag auf einem Kolloquium über Erzähltechniken", in Michael Töteberg (ed.), *Die Logik der Bilder. Essays und Gespräche* (Frankfurt/Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1988), p.71.

³ Christopher Schwarz, "Edgar Reitz. Die 2. Heimat", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Magazin*, 2.4.1993, p.18.

⁴ H. Klotz (ed.), *Edgar Reitz*, pp.17-18.

Ich bin in einer Landschaft aufgewachsen, in der das Geschichtenerzählen eine große Tradition hat. Mein Großvater war im ganzen Dorf ein beliebter Geschichtenerzähler. Diese Geschichten existieren nur mündlich. Das sind Erlebnisse, die mich sehr geprägt haben. Dieses Geschichtenerzählen ist eine Wurzel für meine ganze Vorstellungswelt, und es war für mich ein Erlösung, als ich das wiederentdeckte.⁵

Reitz has indeed declared that he only wants to tell stories: “Für mich gibt es außer Erzählen nichts. ... Ich kann und will nichts anderes tun als erzählen.”⁶ However, his desire to tell stories should not be interpreted as a deflection from avant-garde to mainstream cinema. It is important to recognise *how* Reitz tells stories. The fact that they do not follow a single plot, lead towards a climax and attempt to tie up every loose end, distinguishes his films from commercial cinema. This is in keeping with the suggestions made by the New German filmmakers in developing new forms of storytelling. Reitz continues to reject a type of storytelling that, for example, forces segments of experience into the life story of an individual character, a form of “dramaturgischer Inzest”, as referred to by Kluge.⁷

Wir haben in der Ulmer Zeit gesagt, was wir ablehnen, das ist der sogenannte “dramaturgische Inzest”. Wir haben zum Beispiel gesagt, es kann nicht erstrebenswert sein, eine erzählerische Form zu entwickeln, in der alle Elemente mit allen anderen Elemente in Verbindung treten. Wir haben abgelehnt, ein dramaturgisches Denken einzuführen, also ein Denken, das nicht der Lebenserfahrung entspricht.⁸

In his *Heimat*-films, Reitz produces a chronicle: an epic form of storytelling which allows the linking of several stories and themes without introducing a cause-and-effect relationship between them. This form of storytelling challenges the linear, plot-orientated stories offered by conventional cinema, and returns instead to the ancient art of oral storytelling. This notion of storytelling of course demands that films should depart from the 90 or 100-minute format:

⁵ Ibid., p.24.

⁶ Edgar Reitz in Michael W. Schlicht, “Gespräch mit Edgar Reitz”, in M. W. Schlicht and Siegfried Quandt (eds.), *Szenische Geschichtsdarstellung. Träume über Wissen?* (Marburg: Hitzert, 1989), p.103.

⁷ Alexander Kluge, *Die Patriotin*, (Frankfurt/M.: Zweitausendeins, 1979), pp.40-41.

⁸ Edgar Reitz in H. Klotz (ed.), *Edgar Reitz*, p.26.

With *Heimat*, I came to the conclusion that the feature film has a certain novella-like pattern, that the feature film in the classic dimension of 90 or 100 minutes has a form which doesn't allow an epic, narrative one. Thus, practically all adaptations of novels in the history of cinema are awful. They lack essential aspects of the literary original. But, since the beginning of film, there have been attempts at the *autonomous* form, i.e. not just the imitation of literary models, to reach narrative dimensions which break out of the novella-like pattern. This is necessary because cinematic art has such an incredible ability to tell stories – and, on the other hand, such stories are left unexploited.⁹

Reitz's established role as a storyteller is not to be understood as a departure from his earlier avant-garde concepts, but rather a shift. He now embraces storytelling, but he does so using a unique film format as his vehicle, in line with the concepts developed in Ulm.

The second major controversy surrounding Reitz's work concerns its presentation in television. The films have been largely referred to as a television series, a miniseries, or even a "glorified miniseries".¹⁰ This could not be further from Reitz's intentions. From the outset of his filmmaking career, Reitz has consistently rejected television as an inferior medium to the cinema. In his first essay, "Liebe zum Kino", he suggests that television should concentrate on developing its own aesthetic structure, instead of offering cinema films in a trivialised form:

Untersuchen wir ein Fernsehprogramm, so stellen wir fest, daß es fast ausnahmslos aus den Traditionen und Erfahrungen des Films lebt und nur selten eine künstlerische oder formale Eigenständigkeit erkennen läßt. Die Notwendigkeit, eigene Ausdrucksformen zu finden, ist – streng genommen – für das Fernsehen größer als für den Film. Das Fernsehen wird dies eines Tages erkennen. Es wird sich vom Film entfernen und nicht weiter versuchen, ihn zu ersetzen oder in verniedlichter Form in die Wohnstuben zu liefern. Wir können im Fernsehen nicht lernen, wie der Film auszusehen hat.¹¹

During the production of *Heimat*, which was funded by television and became an international success in the same media, he maintained that despite using the financial powers of television, the film was not moulded in a manner characteristic of television production.

⁹ Thomas Thieringer, "The Loss of the Utopian Dream", *München Film News*, part 4, 1991, p.5.

¹⁰ J. Hobermann, "Once in a Reich Time".

¹¹ E. Reitz, "Liebe zum Kino", p.7.

For the cinema we made a two-parter, two times eight hours for two days, because we told ourselves no person can see it in one sitting, one must be able to go home and sleep. Only afterwards did we divide it into eleven parts for television, but these are of different lengths, so that even here it doesn't have the character of a television series. We used none of the formulas of television or TV series. We worked only according to our concepts of cinema, and there, however, also outside the rules because 16-hour films for the cinema just don't exist.¹²

The films were intended to challenge television's reliance on uniformity in their constant alternation between colour and monotone, and their refusal to follow one narrative tone; factors which triggered many complaints amongst viewers and critics of *Heimat*:

In the closing episodes the film's narrative drive increasingly fragments, coming closer to the approach of Kluge's collage texts, and paralleling the music written by Hermann, now a composer, who has rejected family and village. It brings to a culmination an accumulation of non-naturalistic devices which have been used in the film, including dream-images, the use of family photographs, and narration by the "village idiot". This distances it from most television serial work.¹³

However, even this has been largely criticised as not disruptive enough: "the collective reception of *Heimat* rather refutes the argument that the ruptures in the film have any rupturing effect."¹⁴ Critics clearly believe that with *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat*, Reitz has given up his ambitious plans for a cinema utopia.

While there are some aspects in *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat* which conform to television aesthetics, namely the length, episodic structure, approach to history from below, the development of the story of several characters instead of one hero, emphasis on emotions rather than action, most of these features also conform to the programme developed in Ulm as part of a cinema utopia. Thus, Reitz's avant-gardist concepts for a cinema utopia actually show a great affinity to the production modes of television; a similarity which Reitz has not acknowledged, even after the success of his *Heimat*-films in television.

This oversight could be attributed to one main difference between the two media, namely that they offer a social event of a different quality. Reitz's appraisal of the collective festive atmosphere offered by the venue cinema has become louder during his career. In almost every interview and essay he refers to cinema's unique ability to

¹² F.A. Birgel, "You Can Go Home Again", p.6.

¹³ Martin Chalmers, "Heimat. Approaches to a Word and a Film", *Framework*, part 26/27, 1985, pp.96-98.

offer an auditorium which makes possible the intense and collective experience of a film. Although television can also offer a collective experience, this is amongst a far smaller group of people, familiar with one another and surrounded by domestic distractions. In this respect television will always fall short of Reitz's concept of a cinema utopia.

Es erweist sich, daß die Idee des Kinos von Anfang an mehr war als nur eine Vorführung oder Verteilung von Filmen. Es war immer schon, was ihm heute seine Überlebenschance gibt, ein Gemeinschaftserlebnis. Die Menschen erkennen mehr und mehr den Unterschied zwischen der privaten Einsamkeit der Bildschirmunterhaltung und dem Erlebnis, im Kino anderen Menschen zu begegnen, die von den gleichen Sehnsüchten getrieben werden wie man selbst.¹⁵

Reitz's collaboration with and success in television should therefore not be interpreted as his departure from pursuing his early avant-garde concepts for a cinema utopia. His *Heimat*-films are clearly informed by his early avant-garde concepts for a new cinema. That these have been successful in television is a reflection upon the possibilities and powers of television.

Reitz's *Heimat*-films show a shift in the direction of his filmmaking; one that is not afraid to compete with conventional cinema and even television, while also continuing to challenge some of its major features. Reitz has breathed new life into the art of storytelling in film, which was undermined by its conventionalised presentation in commercial cinema. He has also tested the boundaries of television, albeit unintentionally, demonstrating that it is not only capable of presenting avant-garde works of art, but that it can also do this very successfully. Most importantly, Reitz has re-addressed and eventually revised his pursuit of a new venue for his cinema utopia, declaring that it is no longer the venue that matters, but rather the bringing together of filmmakers and their audience, wherever this may be:

Wir sollten endlich verstehen, daß der Film weder dem Kino noch dem Fernsehen, sondern den Machern und dem Publikum gehört. Wichtig ist, daß es zu einer Form des Dialogs, der Begegnung kommt zwischen der Phantasie derer, die Filme machen, und der Phantasie derer, die Filme sehen, und dieser Dialog kann überall stattfinden.¹⁶

¹⁴ G. Koch, "That's Why Our Mothers Were Such Nice Chicks' (Edgar Reitz)", p.20.

¹⁵ Edgar Reitz, *Bilder in Bewegung. Essays. Gespräche zum Kino* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), p.257.

¹⁶ Edgar Reitz in Thomas Thieringer, "In eine Welt gelangen, in der es Lebensglück gibt", p.22.

However, just like the endings to his films, this should not be taken as a final conclusion, but a temporary one, during which Reitz continues to make films which test the boundaries of both media for the sake of his “love for the cinema”, not the cinema as we know it, but a cinema utopia.

Filmography

Abbreviations

d: director *c*: camera *s*: sound *f*: format & running time
sc: script *ed*: editor *m*: music *p*: production

Schicksal einer Oper (1957)

d, sc, c, ed: Bernhard Dörries, Stefan Meuschel, Edgar Reitz, *m*: Orchester der bayrischen Staatsoper, Die Bamberger Symphoniker, *f*: 35mm, b/w, 20mins, *p*: Studio für Dokumentarfilm, München/ Filmstudio Walter Leckebusch.

Education Transport films (1959)

d, c: Edgar Reitz, *ed*: Laterna, Anni Giese, *m*: Josef Anton Riedl, *f*: 35mm, b/w, 6 parts – 5 mins each, *p*: Bavaria-Filmkunst AG for Bayerischen Rundfunk.

Krebsforschung I and II (1959)

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, *ca*: Edgar Reitz, Thomas Mauch, *ed*: Beate Mainka, *f*: 35mm, colour, 2 parts – 30 mins each, *p*: Bayer AG, Leverkusen.

Baumwolle (1959)

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, *c*: Edgar Reitz, Thomas Mauch, *ed*: Beate Mainka, *m*: Josef Anton Riedl, *f*: 35mm, Agfacolor, 32 mins, *p*: D 56 Produktion/ Bayer AG, Leverkusen.

Ärztetkongreß (1960)

d, sc, c: Edgar Reitz, *f*: 35mm, colour, 30 mins, *p*: D-56 Produktion/Bayer AG, Leverkusen (not premiered).

Moltopren I-IV (1960)

d, sc, c, ed: Edgar Reitz, *m*: Josef Anton Riedl, *f*: 35mm, colour, 91 mins, *p*: Bayer AG, Leverkusen.

Yucatan (1960)

d, sc, c: Edgar Reitz, *ed*: Beate Mainka, *m*: Josef Anton Riedl, *f*: 35mm, colour, 32 mins, *p*: D 56 Produktion.

Kommunikation. Technik der Verständigung (1961)

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, *c*: Edgar Reitz, Karl Heinz Giese, *ed*: Anni Giese, Edgar Reitz, *m*: Josef Anton Riedl, *f*: 35mm, colour and b/w, 11 mins, *p*: Bavaria Filmkunst GmbH.

Post und Technik (1961)

d: Edgar Reitz, *sc*: Edgar Reitz, H. Günther Stark, *c*: Edgar Reitz, Karl Heinz Giese, *ed*: Anni Giese, *m*: Josef Anton Riedl, *f*: 35mm, colour, 30 mins, *p*: Bavaria Filmkunst GmbH.

Einer wie du und ich aus Europa (1962)

d, sc, c: Edgar Reitz, *f*: 16mm, b/w, 27 mins, *p*: Ifage-Filmproduktion GmbH, Wiesbaden.

Geschwindigkeit. Kino eins (1963)

d: Edgar Reitz, Hatto Kurtenbach (assistant), *sc*: Edgar Reitz, *c*: Edgar Reitz, Thomas Mauch, *ed*: Edgar Reitz, Marion Imhof, *m*: Josef Anton Riedl, *f*: 35mm, Ultrascope, b/w, 13 mins, *p*: Inselfilm GmbH.

Approx. fifty commercials and industry films (1963-1965)

d: Edgar Reitz, *p*: Inselfilm GmbH.

VariaVision (1965)

d: Edgar Reitz, Herbert Krohmann (assistant), *sc*: Edgar Reitz, Alexander Kluge, *c*: Thomas Macuh, Gerhard Peters, Günter Hörmann, *ed*: Barbara Schröder, *m*: Josef Anton Riedl, *f*: 35mm, cinemascope, b/w, colour, 16 films presented continuously – 36 mins each, *p*: Inselfilm GmbH (a one-off event).

Binnenschiffahrt (1965)

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, *c*: Gerhard Peters, *ed*: Barbara Schröder, *m*: Josef Anton Riedl, *f*: 35mm, Ultrascope, colour, 9 mins, *p*: Inselfilm GmbH.

Die Kinder (1966)

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, *c*: Thomas Mauch, *ed*: Beate Mainka, *f*: 35mm, b/w, 11 mins, *p*: Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Ulm.

Mahlzeiten (1966/67)

d: Edgar Reitz, Ula Stöckl (assistant), *sc*: Edgar Reitz, Alexander Kluge (advisor), Hans Dieter Müller (advisor), *c*: Thomas Mauch, Frank Brühne, *ed*: Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Anni Giese, Elisabeth Orlow, Maximiliane Mainka, *s*: Herbert Prasch, Hans-Jörg Wicha, *m*: Maurice Ravel, *f*: 35mm, b/w, 94 mins, *p*: Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Ulm.

Fußnoten (1967)

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, *c*: Edgar Reitz, Thomas Mauch, *ed*: Maximiliane Mainka, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, *s*: Hans-Jörg Wicha, *m*: Maurice Ravel, *f*: 35mm, b/w, 85 mins, *p*: Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Munich.

Popfilms (1966/67)

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, *c*: Edgar Reitz, Thomas Mauch, *ed*: Beate Mainka, *m*: contemporary pop music, *f*: 35mm, colour and b/w, 13 pop films – approx. 5 mins each, *p*: Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Ulm, (not premiered).

Karin Rohn. Gymnastik für alte Leute (1967)

d, sc, c, ed: Edgar Reitz, *f*: 35mm, b/w, 7 films – approx. 5 mins each, *p*: Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Ulm.

Filmstunde (1968)

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, *c*: Dedo Weigert, Thomas Mauch, *ed*: Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, *s*: Klaus Eckelt, *f*: 16mm, b/w, 110 mins, *p*: Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Munich.

Uxmal (1968)

d: Edgar Reitz, Alf Brustellin (assistant), *sc:* Edgar Reitz, *ed:* Maximiliane Mainka, *s:* Herbert Prasch, *f:* 35mm, colour, 75 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Munich.

Cardillac (1969)

d: Edgar Reitz, *team:* Antje Ellermann, Uwe Gluntz, Bernd Hoeltz, Ilse Schwarzwald, Dietmar Zander, Piter Zech, *sc:* Edgar Reitz, based on E.T.A. Hoffmann's "Das Fräulein Scuderi", *c:* Dietrich Lohmann, Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein, *ed:* Maximiliane Mainka, Hannelore von Sternberg, *s:* Peter Beil, *m:* Johann Sebastian Back, *f:* 35mm, Eastmancolor and b/w, 97 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion.

Geschichten vom Kübelkind (1970)

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, Ula Stöckl, *c:* Edgar Reitz, Kemal Ormanlar, *ed:* Hannelore von Sternberg, *s:* Guido Reitz, *m:* Ekkehard Kühn, *f:* 16mm, colour, 25 films varying from 1min. to 25 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Munich.

Kino zwei (1971)

d, sc, c, s: Edgar Reitz, *ed:* Hannelore von Sternberg, *f:* Super8 transferred onto 2 Zoll-MAZ, colour, approx. 90 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion.

Das goldene Ding (1971)

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, Ula Stöckl, Alf Brustellin, Nikos Perakis, *c:* Edgar Reitz, Christoph Brandt, *ed:* Hannelore von Sternberg, *s:* Hans Walter Kramsky, *m:* Nikos Mamangakis, *set:* Nikos Perakis, Peter Tschaikner, Toni Lüdi, *costume:* Regine Bätz, *f:* 35mm, colour, 118 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Munich/ WDR Cologne.

Die Reise nach Wien (1973)

d: Edgar Reitz, Alf Brustellin (assistant), *sc:* Edgar Reitz, Alexander Kluge, *c:* Robby Müller, Martin Schäfer, *ed:* Claudia Travnicek, Ina Berlet, *s:* Günther Stadelmann, *set:* Heinz Eickmeyer, *costume:* Monika Altmann-Krieger, *m:* Hans Hammerschmidt, *f:* 35mm, colour, 102 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion/ WDR Cologne.

In Gefahr und größter Not bringt der Mittelweg den Tod (1974)

d, sc: Alexander Kluge, Edgar Reitz, Vit Martinek (assistant), *c:* Edgar Reitz, Alfred Hürmer, Günter Hörmann, Alfred Chrosziel, *ed:* Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, *s:* Burkhard Tauschwitz, Dietmar Lange, *m:* Richard Wagner, Giuseppe Verdi, *f:* 16mm (blown up to 35 mm), b/w, 90 mins, *p:* RK-Film (Reitz-Film, Kairos-Film).

Altstadt – Lebensstadt (1975)

d: Edgar Reitz, Petra Kiener (assistant), *sc:* Oskar Holl, *c:* Edgar Reitz, *ed:* Helga Endler, *s:* Gunther Kortwich, *f:* 35mm, colour, 25 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Munich.

Wir planen ein Picnic (1975)

d: Edgar Reitz, Petra Kiener (assistant), *sc:* Petra Kiener, *c:* Alf Brustellin, *ed:* s: Günther Stadelmann, *f:* 16mm, colour, 19 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Munich.

Wir gehen wohnen (1975)

d: Edgar Reitz, Petra Kiener (assistant), *sc:* Petra Kiener, *c:* Alf Brustellin, *ed:* Eva Schlensag, Helga Endler, *s:* Günther Stadelmann, *f:* 16mm, colour, 20 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Munich.

Stunde Null (1976)

d: Edgar Reitz, Petra Kiener (assistant), *sc:* Peter Steinbach, Edgar Reitz, Karsten Witte (assistance), Petra Kiener (assistance), *c:* Gernot Roll, Rainer Lanuschky, *ed:* Ingrid Broszat, Anette Dorn, *s:* Vladimir Vizner, *m:* Nikos Mamangakis, *set:* Winfried Hennig, *costume:* Gerlinde Gies, *f:* 35mm, b/w, 111 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion/ Solaris Film, Munich/ WDR Cologne.

Deutschland im Herbst. Grenzstation (1978)

d: Edgar Reitz, Petra Kiener (assistant), *sc:* Peter Steinbach, Edgar Reitz, *c:* Dietrich Lohmann, *ed:* Annette Dorn, *s:* Günther Stadelmann, *m:* Franz Schubert, *f:* 35mm, Eastmancolor, 15 mins, *p:* Pro-ject Filmproduktion im Filmverlag der Autoren, Munich/ Hallelujah-Film, Munich/ Kairos-Film, Munich (a contribution to the collective film by Alf Brustellin, Bernhard Sinkel, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Alexander Kluge, Beate Mainka-Jellinghaus, Maximiliane Mainka, Peter Schubert, Katja Rupé, Hans Peter Cloos and Volker Schlöndorff).

Der Schneider von Ulm (1978)

d: Edgar Reitz, Petra Kiener (assistant), *sc:* Petra Kiener, Edgar Reitz, *c:* Dietrich Lohmann, *ed:* Siegrun Jäger, Evelyn Schmidt, *s:* Mikoslav Hurka, Martin Müller, Rainer Lorenz, *m:* Nikos Mamangakis, *set:* Winfried Hennig, Karel Vacek, Ludovic Siroky, Milos Preclik, *costume:* Barbara Gailling, Jan Kropáček, *f:* 35mm, Eastmancolor, 120 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz-Peter Genée-Filmproduktion/ ZDF.

Susanne tanzt (1979)

d, sc, c, ed: Edgar Reitz, *s:* Christian Reitz, *f:* 35mm, b/w, 17 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Munich (not distributed).

Geschichten aus den Hunsrückdörfern (1981)

d: Edgar Reitz, Petra Kiener (assistant), *sc:* Edgar Reitz, Peter Steinbach (assistance), *c:* Edgar Reitz, Christian Engländer, *ed:* Heidi Handorf, Claudia Remak, *s:* Vladimir Vizner, *m:* Nikos Mamangakis, *f:* 35mm, colour and b/w, 117 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion/ WDR.

Heimat (1984)

Episode 1: *Fernweh*; 2: *Die Mitte der Welt*; 3: *Weihnacht wie noch nie*; 4: *Reichshöhenstrasse*; 5: *Auf und davon und zurück*; 6: *Heimatfront*; 7: *Die Liebe der Soldaten*; 8: *Der Amerikaner*; 9: *Hermännchen*; 10: *Die stolzen Jahre*; 11: *Das Fest der Lebenden und der Toten*.

d: Edgar Reitz, *co-director*, *casting*: Robert Busch, *assistant-director*: Elke Vogt (3-5, 8-11), Martin Höner (6-7), *sc*: Edgar Reitz, Peter Steinbach, *c*: Gernot Roll, Rainer Gutjahr (assistant), *still photography*: Christian Reitz, *ed*: Heidi Handorf, Ursula Goetz-Dickopp, Margarete Rose, Caroline Meier (1-9), Carola Aulitzky (2-6), Kirsten Liesenborghs (8-10), *s*: Gerhard Birkholz, Willi Schwadorf, *m*: Nikos Mamangakis, *set*: Franz Bauer, *costume*: Reinhild Paul (1-3), Ute Schwippert (4-5), Regine Bätz (6-11), *make-up*: Lore Sottung, *pyrotechnics*: Charly Baumgartner, *f*: 35mm, colour and b/w, episode 1: 119mins; 2: 93mins; 3: 58mins; 4: 58mins, 5: 58mins; 6: 58mins; 7: 59mins; 8: 102mins; 9: 138mins; 10: 82mins; 11: 100mins; *p*: Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion GmbH/ WDR Cologne/ SFB Berlin.

Die Zweite Heimat. Chronik einer Jugend (1992)

Episode 1: *Die Zeit der ersten Lieder*; 2: *Zwei fremden Augen*; 3: *Eifersucht und Stolz*; 4: *Ansgars Tod*; 5: *Das Spiel mit der Freiheit*; 6: *Kennedys Kinder*; 7: *Weihnachtswölfe*; 8: *Die Hochzeit*; 9: *Die ewige Tochter*; 10: *Das Ende der Zukunft*; 11: *Zeit des Schweigens*; 12: *Die Zeit der vielen Worte*; 13: *Kunst oder Leben*.

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, *co-director*, *casting*: Robert Busch, *c*: Gernot Roll (1-5), Gerard Vandenberg (6-8), Christian Reitz (9-13), *camera assistance*: Herbert Sporrer, Constantin Kesting, Erwin Lanzensberger, Christoph Dammast, Daniel Dietenberger, *ed*: Susanne Hartmann, Helga Beyer, Beate von Strauch, Birgit Trautwein, Marina Arxleben, Verena Grimm, Viginie Said, Pia Orlando, *s*: Heiko Hinderks, Manfred Banach, Rainer Wiehr, Heymo Heyder, Reinhard Gloge, Friederike Treitz, *m*: Nikos Mamangakis, *set*: Franz Bauer, Toni Lüdi, Les Oelvedy, Axel Meinhardt, Konrad Schnell, Christian Hartmann, Christian Meyer, Herbert Rathesberger, Frank Peter Scheffel, *costume*: Bille Brassers, Nikola Hoeltz, Yella Rottländer, Reinhard Klebeck, *make-up*: Mia Schöpke, *f*: 35mm, colour and b/w, episode 1: 120mins; 2: 115mins; 3: 116mins; 4: 100mins; 5: 119mins; 6: 108mins; 7: 110mins; 8: 120mins; 9: 118mins; 10: 132mins; 11: 120mins, 12: 121mins; 13: 132mins, *p*: Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion GmbH/ WDR Cologne/ SFB Berlin/ BR Munich/ NDR Hamburg; SWF Baden-Baden/ HR Frankfurt/ BBC London/ TVE Madrid/ SVT Stockholm/ A2 Paris/ Arte Strasbourg/ NRK Oslo/ YLE Finland/ ORF Vienna/ DR Denmark/ SBS Australia.

Die Nacht der Regisseure (1994)

d, sc: Edgar Reitz, *c*: Christian Reitz, Peter Petridis, Stefan von Barbály, *camera assistance*: Helge Haack, Mathias Pilmes, Samir Abou Ghali, *s*: Rüdiger Pederson, Gernot Funke, *m*: Nikos Mamangakis, Aljoscha Zimmermann, *3-D animation*: Peter Graf, *f*: colour, 87 mins, *p*: Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion, Munich, ZDF, Arte, Premiere.

Documentaries on Reitz, *Heimat* and *Die Zweite Heimat* (1982)

Ein Denkmal für den Hunsrück.

Ein paar Tage mit Edgar Reitz

d, sc: Christa Tornow, *c:* Jörg Schömmel, *s:* Hasso Scheele, Peter Braun, Alexander Mc Ghie, *ed:* Heidemarie Warlich, *presenter:* Margit Schwalm, *f:* 45 mins, *p:* SWF, Landesstudio Rheinland-Pfalz.

Beständiger Wechsel (1984)

Das Dorf, die Zeiten und der Heimatfilm

d, sc: Stephan Köster, *c:* Stephan Köster, Manfred Scheer, *s:* Jörg Eberle, Michale Nopens, *ed:* Jörg Eberle, Stephan Eberle, *f:* video, colour, 55 mins, *p:* Tag/Traum Filmproduktion Cologne, commissioned by WDR.

Sonntagsgespräch (1984)

d: Rolf W. Lauschke, *interviewer:* Harry Valérien, *interviewee:* Edgar Reitz, *f:* video, colour, 27.13 mins, *p:* Fernsehstudio Munich/ ZDF.

Abschied vom Drehbuch (1990)

Edgar Reitz dreht *Die Zweite Heimat*

d: Petra Seeger, *c:* Kay Gauditz, *ed:* Jean-Marc Lesguillons, *f:* 16mm, colour, 76 mins, *p:* Wolfgang Ettlich Munich, commissioned by WDR.

Ein Film kommt auf die Welt (1992)

d: Petra Seeger, *c:* Kay Gauditz, Klaus Sturm, *ed:* Josef van Ooyen, *f:* video, colour, 82 mins, *p:* Tag/ Traum Filmproduktion Cologne, commissioned by WDR/ arte.

Bis zum Augenblick der Wahrheit (1993)

Edgar Reitz bei der Vorbereitung zu seinem Film *Die Zweite Heimat*

d: Robert Busch, *c:* Christian Reitz, Stefan Spreer, *s:* Brian Greenman, Lorenz Kloska, Carsten Steigerwald, *ed:* Helga Beyer, *f:* video, colour, 68 mins, *p:* Edgar Reitz Filmproduktion GmbH, commissioned by WDR.

Liebe zum Kino (1993)

Porträt Edgar Reitz

d, sc: Gretl Brand, Rainer Ostendorf, *c:* Torbjörn Karvang, *s:* José Luis Delgado, *ed:* Alexander Gorny, *presenter:* Bernhard Murer, Brigitte Naulet, *f:* video, colour, 62.30 mins, *p:* FADMA Audio- und Videoproduktion Cologne, commissioned by WDR/ arte/ Inter Nationes.

Edgar Reitz – Return to Heimat (1993)

Written and presented by Carole Angier, *d:* Nadia Hagger, *film cameramen:* Jürgen Martin, John Daly, Ron Corbet, Colin Waldeck, *rostrum camera:* Bert Walker, *video tape ed:* Ed Wooden, *film ed:* Malcolm Daniel, *s:* Heimo Sahliger, Jim Greenhorn, Bruce Gallaway, *dubbing mixer:* Aad Wirtz, *dubbing editor:* Mark Summers, *subtitles:* Carole Angier, Andrew Jenkins, *f:* colour, 59.36 mins, *p:* BBC London.

Musik und Sehnsucht (1993)

Die Zweite Heimat – Im Gespräch

d: Peter Sommer, *presenter:* Annette Dittert, *participants:* Salome Kammer, Nikos Mamangakis, Hark Bohm, Christof Wakernagel, *f:* video, colour, 58.15 mins, *p:* WDR.

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